ZERO

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ISSUE TWO DECEMBER £1.50

OVER 30 REVIEWS & PREVIEWS INCLUDING:

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M1 TANK PLATOON • FUTURE WARS
BATMAN • STUNT CAR RACER

THE UNTOUCHABLES

KILLER EXCLUSIVE ON PAGE 18

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ZERO 2





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GAMES LIST
Need to find a game in a hurry? Every single one is listed here in our ZERO quick reference guide.

REVIEWS

PREVIEWS

ZERO
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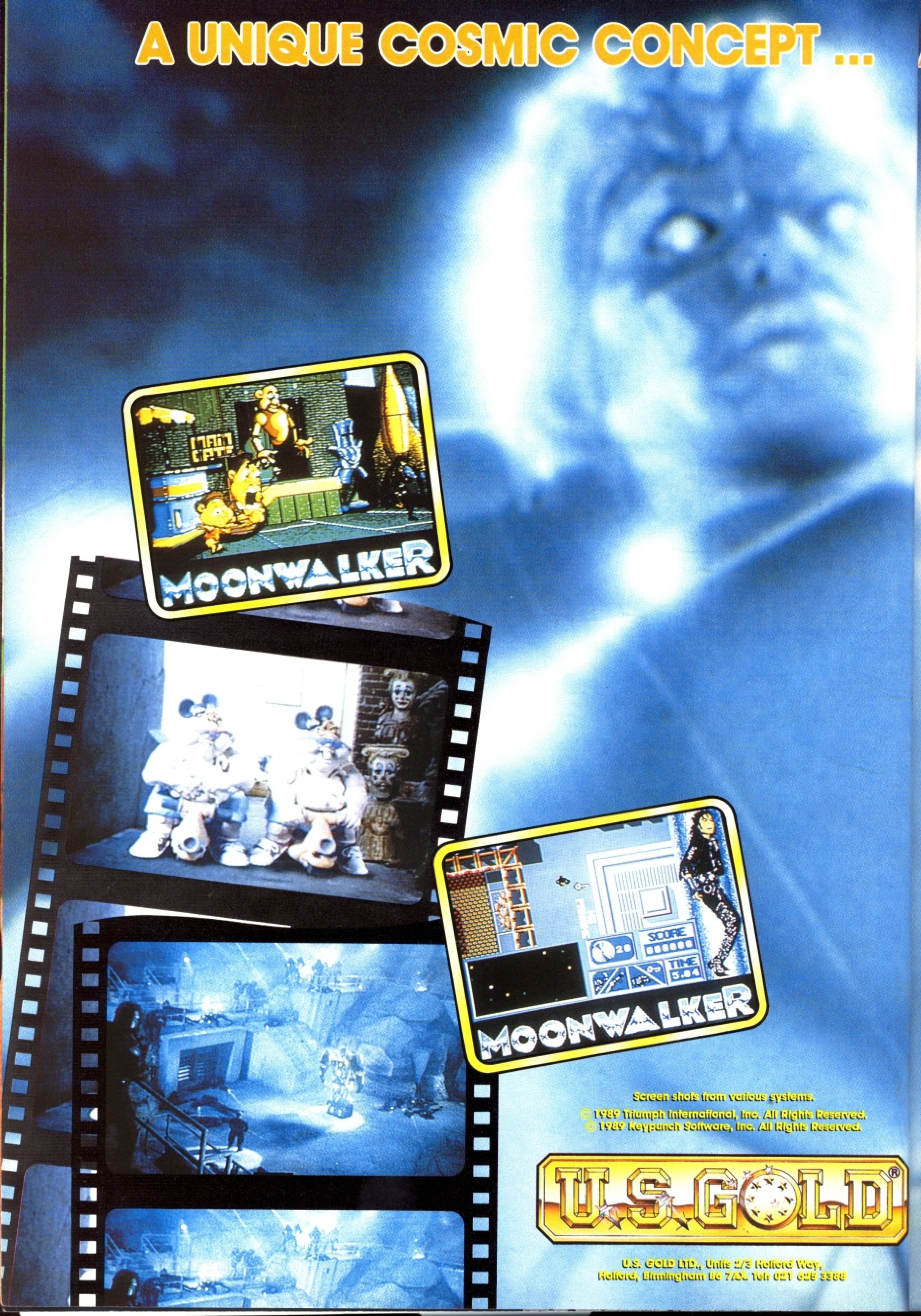
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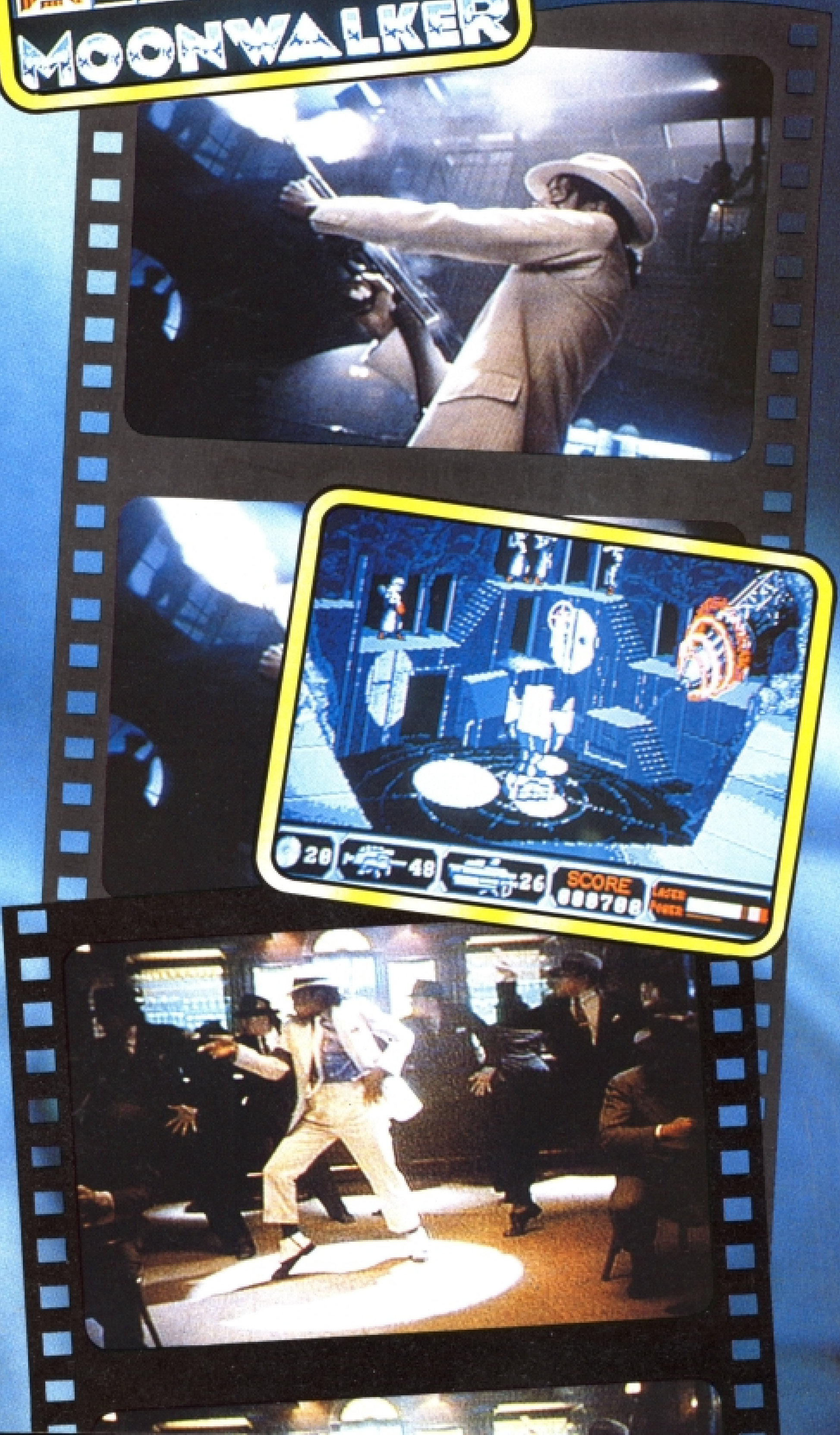

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MOONWALKER
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TIME
Screen shots from various systems.
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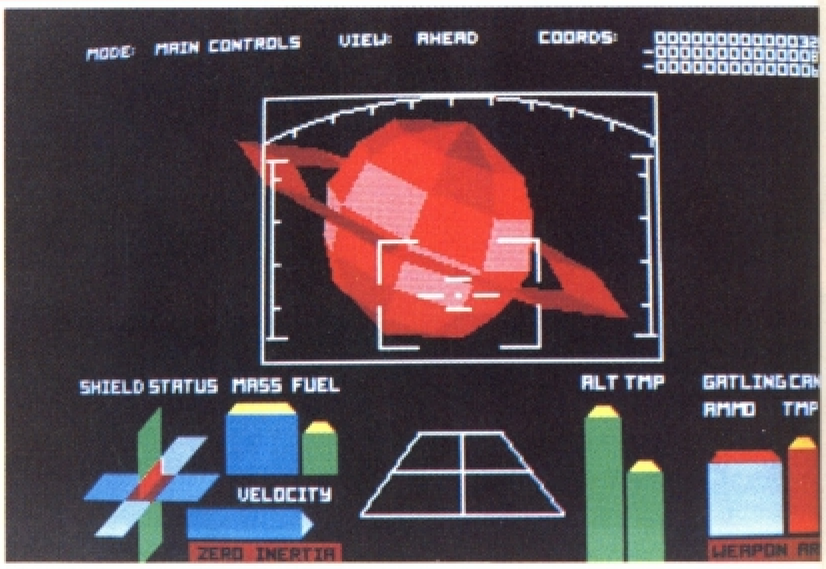
After conquering the world of pop music, Michael Jackson channelled his energy and talent into making his first film. Now U.S. Gold present the home computer version of that film, endorsed by the Superstar himself.

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MISSION POSSIBLE



Newcomer Mission Software (from Zummerzet in deepest yokel land) is hoping to make an impression at the Shopper Show with the launch of a futuristic 3-D space sim called *Dominion,* which is a sort of cross between *Elite* and *Starglider 2.* So what?... we hear you cry. Well, it's got a multi-player mode where you'll be able to link eight (yes EIGHT!) STs, Amigas or PCs together – that's what.

Dominion is set in the year 2100. The multi-nationals have taken over the world and now they're starting to carve up the universe. Players can own a space station, cargo shuttle and battle cruisers. Available now on ST and Amiga. PC version coming soon.

MIRROR'S THREE-QUEL



As Oi! predicted last month – Mirrorsoft has bagged the licence for *Back To The Future II.* It's also obtained the European licence for *Riders Of Rohan*, a Spring release based on those long-haired horse lovers from *Lord Of The Rings.* This one's a bit of an international product, it's being designed by an Australian company and programmed by Americans, no sign of any Icelandic involvement though.

VIRGIN'S VIZ BIZ

Full marks to Virgin Mastertronic for producing the most street-cred hardware ad ever. Its current stonker advertisement in VIZ for the Sega Console has two housewives wittering on. One says to the other: "My Billy's is 12" long, black and hard, and great fun to play with in the bedroom..." The other replies: "So's my Johnny's Sega Console, but he doesn't scream when I plug it into the wall socket!!" Oo-er! Virgin is hoping to release its game of the cult mag early next year.

RIGHT UP YOUR ALLY

Fancy clapping your mince pies on a robotic Santa, a baby elephant, stilt-walkers and a strongman all under one roof? Well read on...

'Cos these weirdos plus loads, loads more will be just some of the attractions at a giant new pre-Christmas event at London's Alexandra Palace – the Computer Shopper Show '89. There'll be 250 stands at "Elly Pelly" from November 24-26 and a number of new games launches.

Organisers Database Exhibitions are billing the show as (quote) "the world's largest pre-Christmas shopping spree". It definitely sounds like *the* place to go for discounted software stocking fillers. Apparently discounts could total close on a million sovs, guv.

Biggies like Amstrad will be there (let's face it – it can't afford not to, after its latest profits) along with Silica Shop and Evesham Micros plus soft-ware companies like Mindscape and Tynesoft. Just to show ZERO's got your best interests (and wallets) at heart howzabout saving yourself 50p of the £4 admission or a stonking £4 off a £14 family ticket with this voucher.

COMPUTER SHOPPER SHOW

50p OFF

This voucher is worth 50p per person off the price of admission to the Computer Shopper Show 1989. It is, alternatively, worth £4 off a family ticket

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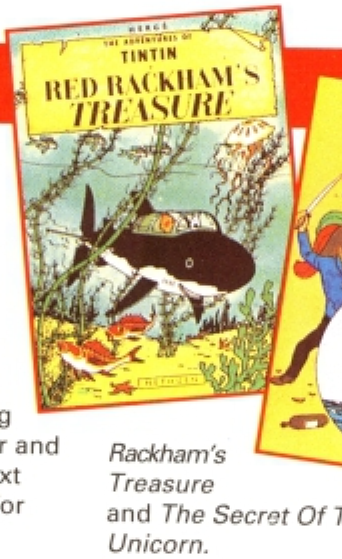
GARY'S BRACING HIMSELF

Ocean's Software Development Manager, genial *(Phew! Could have been a nasty typing error there. Ed.)* Gary Bracey is still reeling at the news of the delay in his much awaited screen debut. 'Cos the release of the horror movie *Night Breed* has been postponed until next Easter. As Ocean has the licence to the chiller, we rang the company to get Gary's reaction, hoping he'd say he was gutted – unfortunately he didn't! *Night Breed* has got 20 monsters, which is the largest assortment ever on screen since *On The Buses – The Movie.*





ENCORE TINTIN



Rackham's Treasure and *The Secret Of The Unicorn.*

Having conquered the moon, as well as ZERO's first cover, Tintin will soon be faced with more perils. French smoothy Infogrames is planning to release two new adventures featuring the boy with the silly hair and even sillier plus-fours next year. The titles lined up for conversion are *Red Rackham's Treasure* and *The Secret Of The Unicorn.*

Those of you still grappling to clock up your first 10,000 points in *Tintin Sur La Lune* (Er... 'On The Moon' to you) might be interested to note that the record at the Infogrames HQ is a whopping 280,000 mind you, that was by one of the garçons who programmed it.

GRAND SLAMMERS

Grandslam go into the new year firing from the hip with two major licensing deals for Sega shoot 'em ups. After *Space Harrier* comes... *Space Harrier II.*

The game is an advance on the original, except perhaps in the title department. For the uninitiated, and fans of our own Binky Berkmann, it should be pointed out that the game has nothing to do with the RAF's famous VTOL aircraft, but is the name of a hero in *The Fantasy World* who treats his enemies to blasts of music packed violence.



KRISIS – WOT KRISIS?

At the time ZERO went to press there were more rumours surrounding the long-awaited *(slight under-statement! Ed.)* Konix Multi–System than about Kylie still 'seeing' Jase.

However despite reports of buy-outs, share bids and even the ditching of the whole product 'konfident' Konix is still predicting its 'korking', er, console will hit the shops before Christmas. The price will be around £229. Initially supplies will be limited so if you happen to have a couple of hundred sovs in your back pocket when you spot one – then snap it up.

The even more long awaited chair is expected in the first quarter of next year for about £250. The combined package of the chair and console is supposed to sell for less than £500, which probably means £499.99.

As for all those rumours, well Konix PR man Michael Baxter says he's heard the rumours, but (not surprisingly) hasn't the faintest idea if they're true, adding that the chair was never supposed to have come out at the same time as the console. Umm... (See 'Konix Kliffhanger' in *Console Action*).



ON THE GRAPEVINE

Let's start this month with a little bit oftotally idle gossip. In fact, it's not so much idle gossip as a potential scandal – so just to cover ourselves we'd better start by saying 'we were told by a bloke in a pub'.

Here goes. 'We were told by a bloke in a pub' that Martin Moth (PR 'supremo' at Microprose) was caught in bed with agony aunt Claire Rayner AND Sue Pollard (of *Hi De Hi* fame). He was wearing a latex Superman costume. Company boss Major Bill (Stealey) was apparently not amused, and Martin was told, in no uncertain terms, 'not to do it again'. We phoned Su Pollard to check the authenticity of the allegations, but she wasn't in. Su's answerphone message simply told us she's playing Dick Whittington at Wimbledon Theatre this Christmas or something!

Activision is continuing its involvement in the lucrative world of arcade conversions by launching three biggies in the New Year. Its whoppa for 1990 will be a conversion of *Dragon Breed* – the mega successful coin-op by the same people who did *R-Type.*

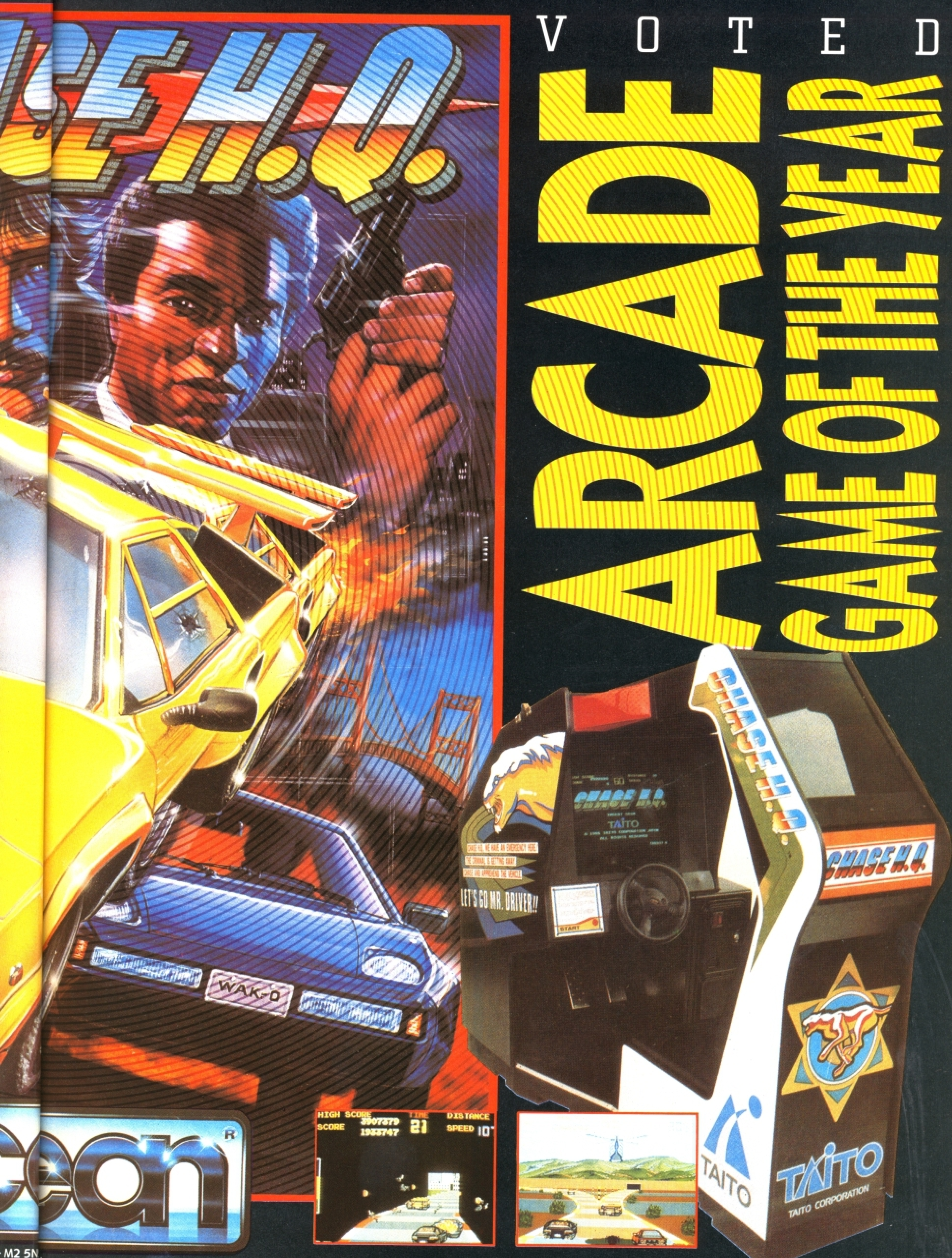
It's also releasing another IREM conversion, *Ninja Spirit* as well as *Atomic RoboKid* later this month.

If you thought the Greens were narked about the way we treat the environment just wait until you meet Mentor next year, in Interceptor's new game *Dominion (Er, doesn't that make two games called* Dominion *– see Mission Possible. Ed.)* Mentor destroyed the dinosaurs in order to give mammals a chance. Now he's returned to Earth and doesn't think we're doing too hot a job either. Before he decides whether to make humans extinct, one representative of the species must undergo a rigorous physical, mental and moral test and for some reason you've been chosen. Ah well do your best...

About 11 minutes after the game hit the arcades, Domark announced that it will be converting *Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters.* Jake and Duke are the men with the square jaws and ultra-brite smiles who'll star in this world of comics, sci-fi and rather long titles.

Cyberball has not got a long title but is another new game from Domark. It's an American Football simulation with a difference – the "ball" consists of 350 pounds of steel and explosives. The players are not your usual college beefcakes either – they're 20 foot tall, eight foot wide cybernetic robots. If nothing else, this proves you don't need brains to play America's national game.

Our mole in Tetbury tells us that Microprose is about to drop some labels from its stable, but it's not saying which –although they admit a decision has been made. The clever money is riding on MicroStatus and MicroStyle but the books are still open. Other labels are still active and new contracts are in the offing but Microprose isn't giving anything away. Except Microstatus and MicroStyle perhaps?


VOTED
ARCADE
GAME OF THE YEAR
LET'S GO MR. DRIVER!!
CHASE H.Q.
TAITO
TAITO CORPORATION
WAK-D
HIGH SCORE
SCORE
TIME
DISTANCE
SPEED
ocean

CHART

1. **INDY GRAPHIC ADVENTURE**/Lucasfilm
2. **STUNT CAR RACER** MicroStyle
3. **FAST LANE** Artronic
4. **XENON II** Imageworks
5. **ALTERED BEAST** Activision
6. **DYNAMITE DUX** Activision
7. **DAILY DOUBLE HORSE RACING**/CDS
8. **FALCON MISSION DISKS** Spectrum Holobyte
9. **OIL IMPERIUM** Reline
10. **PIRATES** Microprose

GRAVITY

Imageworks

If you wanna play God then you can get in some practice by playing *Gravity*. Greedy aliens are eating up all the suns and destroying solar systems to pot. Instead of leaving a nice little pile of



luncheon vouchers behind, these ungrateful *E.T.* rejects leave you with nothing but a black hole that wouldn't be filled by a million Mars Bars. To fight back, you have not only your own scout ship, but also a number of remotely programmed craft, posing something of a problem to those of us who can't even fly one craft without crashing into every static item within miles. The God bit comes in when you attempt to create new planetry systems to replace those that the aliens have gobbled up. You can start creating on PC, ST and Amiga early in 1990 provided you've got £24.99.



HARD DRIVIN'

Domark

They haven't invented a word to describe how good the *Hard Drivin'* coin op is. Pretty flippin' epic is a start but that's... three words.

The problem with coin ops of course is that not a lot of people have got one in their own front room. So if your accelerator foot starts a twitchin' at midnight you'll just have to sit yourself down with a cup of Horlicks and an old *Carry On* video and try to relax. Even when the arcade is open you're not the only person who knows how good this game is. It's not a lot of fun standing in a queue full of Chelsea fans who keep offering to rearrange your dentures if you dare ask them for a go.

Now you can relax 'cos Domark has brought out a 16-bit conversion of *Hard Drivin'* so you too can act like a Chelsea fan in the comfort of your own sitting room. We've been taking a quick butchers at it and we're well impressed.

The graphics are easily as good as those on the arcade version and the soundtrack – complete with tyre roar – has been swapped straight over. You can also appreciate the beautiful sound of a car plowing into a prize fresian!

The conversion retains both the stunt track and the high speed driving option, but best of all, Domark has managed to keep the ghostly 'Phantom Photon'. If you beat this spooky driver then your time and driving pattern get saved as the new Phantom, so you can end up racing against yourself. Well weird.

Obviously there's some loss of 'feel' since the arcade version leaves you a shudderin' in your seat as you grip the wheel with a life of its own. Then again you could always play the 16-bit on the toilet, which would be almost the same. (*Would it? Ed.*) You'll be able to take *Hard Drivin'* for a spin on PC for £24.99 and on Amiga and ST for £19.99 from December. Don't miss our *Hard Drivin'* compo on page 41!



TURBO OUTRUN

US Gold

Get ready to ram your foot down on the gas pedal again 'cos *Outrun* is back – and this time it's turbo charged! *Outrun Turbo* is faster and more power-packed than the blockbusting original which sold an amazing 750,000 and is still selling. Once again you're at the wheel of a devastatingly fast Ferrari F40, but this time you're taking part in a four-stage race across America.

You'll be battling bumper-to-bumper with Porsches, good guys, bad guys, police cars and, er, girlfriends. Whether it's night or day, snow or ice, city streets or mountain passes, this baby's hot and just raring to go on ST, Amiga and PC later this month.





WOLFPACK

PSS

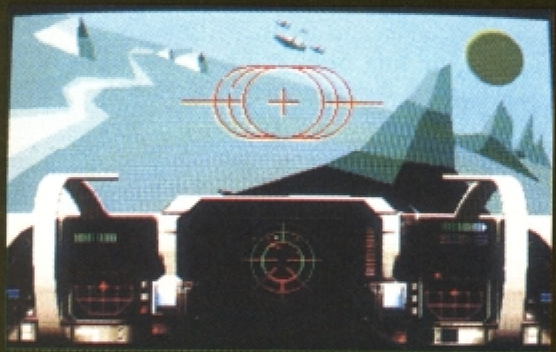
Strap on your wooden leg, feed the parrot and shout "Up Periscope" and all that – PSS are about to release a naval simulation. *Wolfpack* aims to recreate events in the North Atlantic during Autumn 1942, and combines both strategy and arcade features.

Players get to fight submarine battles or set up and carry out special missions. It starts all relaxed and tactical as you control entire fleets, then you have a quick check of the view from one ship and completely scare yourself sh.. *(Snip. Ed.)* The PC version is out at the end of this month, price £24.99 and there's talk of ST and Amiga versions being released next year.

CHART

1. **BATMAN: THE MOVIE** Ocean
2. **SHADOW OF THE BEAST** Psygnosis
3. **XENON II** Imageworks
4. **ALTERED BEAST** Activision
5. **BEACH VOLLEY** Ocean
6. **POPULOUS: PROMISED LANDS**/Electronic Arts
7. **APB** Tengen
8. **TRIAD II** Psygnosis
9. **CENTREFOLD SQUARES** CDS
10. **PAPERBOY** Elite

GOLDRUNNER 3D





Microdeal

No scenario or anything with this one, just a quick quote from the press release to whet your appetite... 'the aim was to create the most realistic space game ever imagined. A game which would do for the computer industry what *Star Wars* did for film... poised to take the software industry by storm.' Modest Microdeals'epic should be out very soon on all formats and the cost of this possible piece of computing history will be remarkably like £24.99. The graphics look startling. Well worth waiting for.

BLADE WARRIOR

Imageworks

Blade Warrior is a fantasy game that owes quite a lot to the imagination of Steven Spielberg. Palladin is a lucky chap. He's a virtuous knight with a trusty broadsword which he's going to need to overcome the Murk – a great evil that is dominating the world. In order to defeat



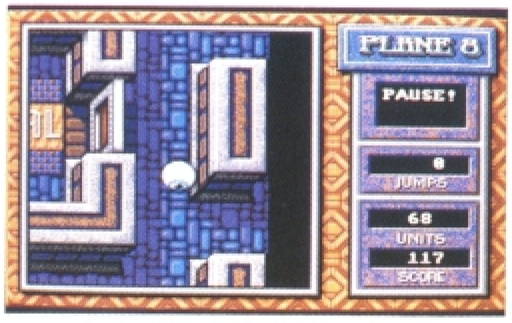
him the Palladin needs a legendary sword which is guarded by – yes you've guessed it – a wizard.

Of course the wizard isn't going to just hand this sword over for free. He wants something in exchange. Wizards are like that, greedy as hell. Our poor hero has to collect a stone tablet, fragments of which are held by loads of other wizards. There are some pretty hot-shot graphics in this one which should be out by December, price £24.99 on all formats.

MINDROLL

Thalamus

"You play an eyeball basically, and roll around a lot" was one description of this EPYX conversion of *Quest For Ultimate Dexterity*. It's actually your mind's eyeball and it's faced with a lot of speed tests, precision control and brain-bending (to say nothing of eye straining) puzzles over 10 levels. This one's set for a Christmas release on ST, Amiga and PC but is best not played



with a stomach full of pudding unless you, er... well, I'm sure you can imagine... Price £19.99

PC CHART

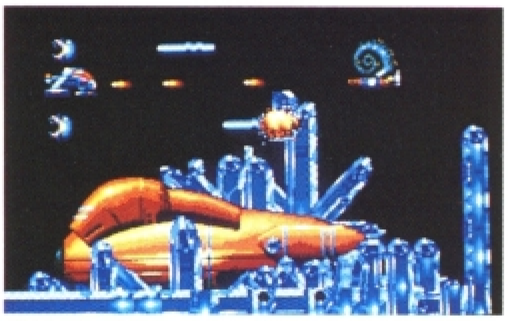
1. **INDY GRAPHIC ADVENTURE**/Lucasfilm
2. **KING'S QUEST TRIPLE PACK**/Sierra On Line
3. **BEYOND THE BLACK HOLE**/Mindscape
4. **CHESSMASTER 2100** CP Software
5. **WATERLOO** PSS
6. **OUTRUN** Kixx
7. **THE DUEL (TEST DRIVE II)**/Accolade
8. **LICENCE TO KILL** Domark
9. **LIFE AND DEATH** Mindscape
10. **POLICE QUEST II** Sierra On Line



X-OUT

Rainbow Arts

If you fancy yourself as a bit of a marine boy then *X-Out* could be right up your coral reef. It's billed as the ultimate undersea action game and sees you battling against aliens from Alpha Centauri who are threatening the freedom of the earth. The little green men have built their stations underwater and are launching their attacks from there. You're piloting the ultimate submarine against these slippery devils in Project Deep Star. There are eight glugging levels, 40 different aliens and you can even buy and sell extra weapons. Slip on your wet-suit 'cos you'll have to tread water until close on Christmas for this one. It'll be available on ST and Amiga and will cost £19.99.

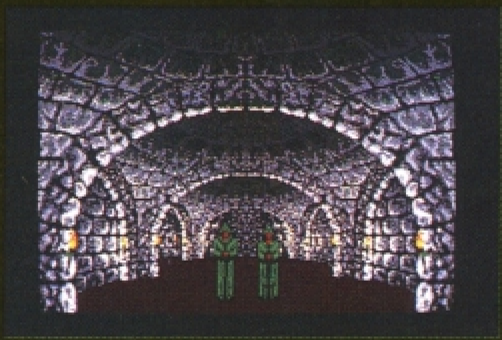


THE LOST PATROL

Ocean

You've seen *Platoon, The Deer Hunter* and *Hamburger Hill,* well now you can play (or is it, endure?) the horrors of 'Nam in Ocean's newie, *The Lost Patrol.* You're the leader of seven weary GIs who've been stranded after a chopper crash with little or no hope of getting back to your lines. You've got to trek through paddy fields and jungles, keep your ragged platoon's morale up *and* avoid Viet Cong raids and booby traps. Sounds pretty traumatic, but let us assure you – the graphics are out of this world! Should be available on ST for £19.99 and Amiga for £24.99, later this month.





SEARCH FOR SHARLA

Thalamus

If you can imagine a combination of *Dungeon Master* and *Lords Of Midnight* then you're a little way towards getting an idea of this newcomer from Thalmus. It's so new that it's not even finished yet, but it already contains 512 interactive characters on each of the 12 moons you trek across, on your search for Sharla. Action takes place above and below ground and characters come and go as suns rise and set. Thalamus promises walks through landscapes and elements of strategy in this graphic quest which could last for years. Should be out on the ST in the new year.

THEME PARK MYSTERY

Imageworks

Well lucky old you, you've just inherited the Magic Canyon Theme Park from grandpa. No one goes there anymore. Well, they wouldn't would they? Not while there's a mysterious thingy lurking. It sent gramps mad (which probably explains why he gave it to you) and it's going to make you bankrupt if you don't do something about it – quick. *Theme Park Mystery* contains superb graphics and a mystery that takes all your skill to survive, let alone solve. Out early next year on all formats for £24.99.



GHOSTBUSTERS II

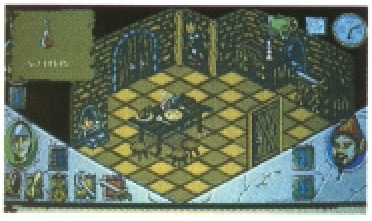




Activision

With the licence to a film as mega as *Ghostbusters II,* Activision could have produced a pretty average game and left it at that. The dosh would have rolled in, but Joe Consumer *(I think he means us. Ed.)* would have been disappointed. Thankfully this isn't the case here. You can tell the programmers have worked closely with the script 'cos they've produced a game which really lives up to its pedigree.

The three arcade levels are each based on a scene from the movie and look really great. You can avoid spooky slimers and gremlins as you're winched down a New York City sewer, protect the amazing walking Statue of Liberty in an arcade shoot 'em up (we're not kidding!) and finally play all the 'busters when you pit your wits against the evil Vigo. *Ghostbusters II* wil be out with the movie in early December and you can be slimed on ST for £19.99 and Amiga for £24.99.



THE FINAL BATTLE

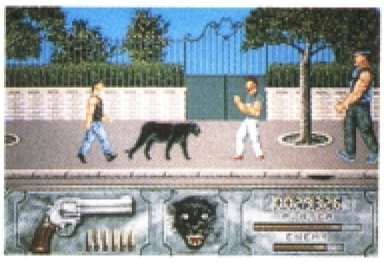
Imageworks

If you survived *The Legend of the Sword* then strap on your armour and get ready to fight again. It's the last battle and things have already got off to a bad start. The evil wizard Suzar has escaped. (Well what do you expect if you imprison him in a tear?) Meanwhile the hero is imprisoned in an underground cell (no tear nonsense for him) and he should count himself lucky, two of his party are in a torture chamber and the others are dead. Not only have you got to retrieve the sword and shield you've also got to lay your hot sweaty palms on six crystals to give you ultimate power. As if that wasn't enough the flaming weather keeps changing as well. *The Final Battle* is out next month on ST, Amiga and PC early next year, price £24.99.

WILD STREETS

Titus

Fancy pitting your wits against the might of the Mafia? Erm, well maybe in a computer game. Titus' latest will give you the chance to do just that. The plot goes like this. The local Police Chief has been kidnapped by the Mob after he (unwisely) tried to stamp 'em out. Your task is simple – just rescue the Chief. Your only ally is a black panther who sticks to you like gum to your shoe. There are great big sprites, tasty animation and 30 levels of action-packed gameplay. *Wild Streets* should be out in time for Santa on ST, Amiga and PC for £24.99.





MIDWINTER

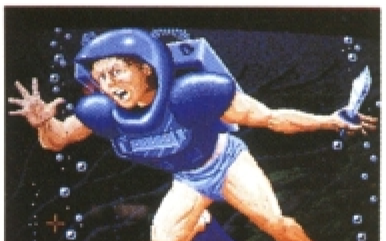
Rainbird

Eeen the bleeeek meeed-weeenturrrrrr, frosteee weeends mayyyy mooooan... remember the Chrissy carol? Well don't worry, this isn't the game of the Chrissy ditty. No, yet again, you have been given the job of saving the civilised world. Except in this case it's not very civilised, 'cos it's set quite a few years after the Ruskies and Yanks disposed of their nuclear weapons on each other's soil, and the nuclear winter has set in, in a big way. Anyway, in order to save the rather cold uncivilised territories you will find yourself hang-gliding, skiing, riding cable cars and driving ski buggies. Twenty-five sovs will secure your winter wonderland fun, and it'll be cold enough for release this month on all formats.

AQUANAUT

Addictive Games

At last, a game for drips! Well, not quite, but it does involve profound amounts of water. Oceans full, in fact. For in *Aquanaut,* you have been given the task of destroying the Ramanishi Flagship, which is somewhere around the bottom of the Atlantic. Amongst the hazards you are going to come up against in the huge arcade adventure are sharks, monsters, aliens, and the brilliantly animated Rockodiles. Out very soon, for a price not unlike twenty five quid.



Charts supplied by the Virgin Computer Games Shop, Virgin Megastore, Oxford Street. Tel. 01- 631 1234

STOP


"THE ULTIMATE DRIVING EXPERIENCE"
C & VG
STUNT CAR RACER
"The tracks are superbly designed starting with a fairly straightforward but lumpy oval and progressing to such delights complete with massive (& I mean MASSIVE) jump & roller coaster track which has enough hills to turn the stomach of the hardest drivers." – C & VG
"Quite simply Stunt Car is the best racing game yet seen on a home computer – check it out." – C & VG
"Stunt Car is utterly brilliant and offers adrenaline pumping gut wrenching high speed action that will keep you engrossed for months – C & VG
"An action packed game that had us on the edge of our seats." – TGM
STUNT CAR RACER
93% TGM
93% C & V
RVF
The motor bike simulator of the Honda 750 RVF. Race on Clubman and world famous tracks.
"A near perfect blend of simulation & action" – ACE
"Amazing graphics" – CU
"If this, as MicroProse maintain is the shape of the Amiga games to come then everybody should buy an Amiga now" – CU
RVF
HONDA
ACE RATED 915
C+VG
HIT!
Games for Adults
MicroStyle
A DIVISION OF MICROPROSE SOFTWARE
MicroProse, Unit 1, Hampton Road Industrial Estate, Tetbury, Glos, GL8 8DA.

ZERO reviews

OH DEAR.

Um, there was a bit of a 'cock–up' last ish, as you probably noticed. We thought we'd explain the scoring system by bunging each of the 'sub-headings' onto a nifty yellow strap: "That'll make them stand out," we thought. But disaster struck: somewhere along the line, all the blinking letters fell off the yellow bits. So here's a repeat performance (with *all* of the letters in place).

THE VERDICT

G	GRAPHICS	90
S	SOUND	90
A	ADDICTIVENESS	81
E	EXECUTION	83

20 · 40 · 60 · 80 · 100

A graphical masterpiece and a brilliant conversion to boot. **84**

Every month the best games will have a full three or four pages devoted to them. These meaty **BIG REVIEWS** will have a basic run through of the scenario and game genre, followed by detailed reviews of all the different formats the game is currently available on. Dotted about will be boxes containing some rather important info – so read on.

WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	Tintin
PUBLISHER	Infogrames
PRICE	£19.99
FORMAT	ST/Amiga/PC
RELEASED	November

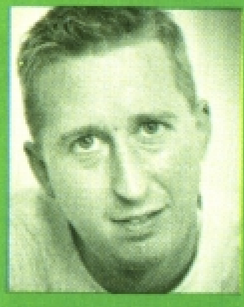
THE VERDICT box is pretty straightforward, with marks (out of 100) awarded for Graphics, Sound, Addictiveness and Execution. The first three are self-explanatory, but here's what Execution means. If programmers have used tried and tested routines ('3-D scroll' for instance) which look a trifle 'old hat', and aren't really pushing the machine or trying to cover new ground, they won't get top marks here. And if they have done something different and brill, they will. Logical, non? There's also a brief summary next to the Final Score – useful for both lazy people and dyslexics (it'll save them a considerable amount of time). The **HASSLE-FACTOR** score – which is marked out of 10 – is tied in with the Execution factor. Is there a lot of disk accessing? Is it really necessary? For instance, a game that loads in a big title screen (however 'fabby') between each 'go' can be incredibly annoying, when all you want to do is get stuck back in. As for the **WHAT'S WHAT** box, this simply gives you the details surrounding a game's, erm, release. And what's the highest accolade any game can get? Only the **ZERO HERO** – the ultimate award which is given to games that the 'ace' ZERO review team considers particularly outstanding. To qualify for a ZERO Hero the game must get an overall score of at least 90. And games that don't get the multi-page treatment will still get coverage on every available format – in the form of ZERO **SHORTS**. All the games here will still be reviewed in depth – just using less ink! **DÉJÀ VU** is the space reserved for new formats of games that have already been seen on other machines. We'll review the updated format and include an issue reference so you can check out what we had to say about the initial versions when they first came out. Finally, there's **THE PRICE IS RIGHT**. These are the budget reviews – shorter and sweeter to digest and kinder on the pocket (and the Scandinavian pine forests). These only get an overall score 'cos, erm... they're cheap.

CRITICS' CORNER

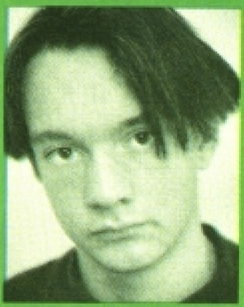
This month, before allocating games to reviewers, we asked each member of the 'joystick posse' exactly what he (or she, in Jackie's case) thought of the rum old 'sport' of golf. Here's what they said...



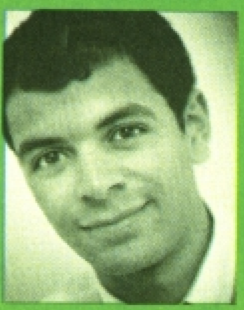
Sean Kelly: Golf? What's that got to do with anything? Erm, golf golf golf golf golf. Um, I don't know – you've caught me off guard. Um, well, the balls are a bit small, aren't they? I mean, considering the distance they have to travel you'd have thought football size would be more appropriate (they'd have to make the clubs and holes bigger as well though). Sorry, that's all I know about it.



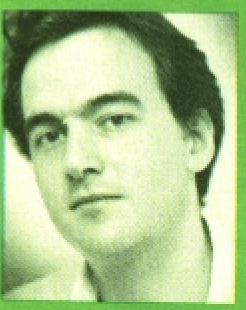
Duncan MacDonald: Golf? Hmmm. Well, TV golfers all look a bit scruffy to my way of thinking, so maybe a uniform of some description might be in order – um... hats! That's it, golfers all ought to wear a hat – the same type of hat, but each one in a different colour so you can tell who's who 'at a glance' (even from a distance). And the best player of the season could have a special 'silver' one.



David 'Macca' McCandless: Now you're talking. It's my favourite sport, golf. Walking around a giant field with a sawn-off shotgun looking for the little white balls and blowing them into tiny fragments: then locating any 'holes' and bunging them up with concrete and broken glass. That's my idea of a really brilliant day out in the country. *(Um, I think he's a trifle confused about the rules actually. Ed.)*



Gareth Herincx: Ian Woosnam's a jolly little fellow, isn't he? He just sort of bobs around the course getting birdie after birdie after birdie. Sevvy Ballesteros, on the other hand, is a bit of a 'strop merchant'. He sinks his putts with as much verve and authority as Woosnam, but tends to swear under his breath while he's doing it – which might easily upset any particularly sensitive lip-reading viewers.



Paul Lakin: I have a slightly different approach to the game from that of the 'professionals' – it's called 'hit and seek'. I place the ball on the tee, pick up my trusty one-iron and thwack! Then I spend two or three hours on my hands and knees scrabbling around in the woods trying to find the bloody things again. It's great fun! Especially when the ball and the club end up in the middle of a gorse bush.



Mike Gerrard: I'm another person who rather enjoys the 'hit and seek' aspect of amateur golf (as you might expect from someone who writes the ZERO adventure pages). Actually, while searching for my ball the other day I chanced upon a small goblin nestling in a rabbit hole. "Do you have any rice, oh bearded one?" he asked me, holding out three shiny silver groats... *(Oh no, he's off again. Ed.)*



Jackie Ryan: Golf? Oh good. I thought you were going to make all sorts of jokes about me being short, like they always do in *Your Sinclair*. Actually, I think golf is quite hard for someone of my size – nobody makes the clubs the right length. I always have to hold the metal shaft, and end up poking myself in the eyes with the handle. It'd be more fair you were allowed to stand on a stool.

Photos: Tony Sleep

review

THE UNTOUCHA





Prohibition Chicago can't have been a brilliant place to live according to the *The Untouchables* movie. For a start all the girlies wore shower caps with sequins on and did a stupid 'dance' called the Charleston, and what was even worse – booze was banned! But this didn't stop some wily scamps from making their own, or even importing it illegally. And though the liquor made a massive profit for the importer, it was just as likely to taste like diesel oil and hit your stomach like a lethal dose of paint stripper.

The government set about capturing rascals like Al Capone, who was a booze importer and also pretty handy with a baseball bat. He made millions out of illegally selling alcohol, but no one could pin a single crime on him. The odd carnation, but not a single eensy weensy little crime.

No one that is, until Eliot Ness formed his band of 'Untouchables' and eventually nailed Capone for tax evasion, of all things.

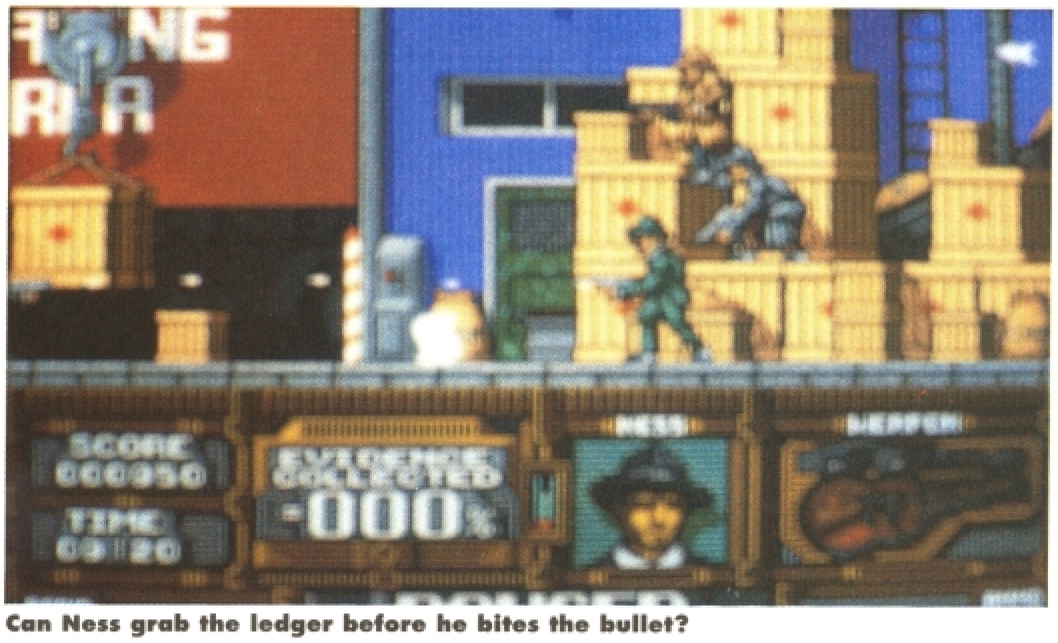
Now Ocean has made a game of the movie so it's not suprising that *The Untouchables* game concentrates on this aspect. Six of the major scenes have been adapted and pack in almost as many gut wrenchin' bullet blasting frames as were in the whole movie. Lights... Camera... Action...

Level one is an adaptation of the warehouse raid which occurs fairly early on in the film. Ness hasn't even recruited his 'Untouchables' so he's on his own for this one. It's quite a straightforward platform and ladders–type game, in which Ness must find and shoot 10 ledger-carrying bad guys, and collect the ledgers they drop. These ledgers contain vital information pertaining to Al Capone's jolly little tax wheezes. But there's no time for Ness to mess around reading them 'cos he's working against a clock which can make the minutes bullet by.

An arrow indicates where the ledger carrier is and this helps matters slightly. Pranging him is a different bottle of illicit gin altogether though, 'cos he keeps running away, and leaping up and down the packing crates in a bid to avoid capture. Ness isn't helped by the fact that Capone's mob have a liberal 'bullet allowance' in their wage, and all seem more than happy to share it with him. Collecting violin cases dropped by wasted baddies though, helps Ness upgrade his weapons and provides him with enough energy and ammunition to complete the level.

A BRIDGE TOO FAR...

Level Two finds Ness in the process of intercepting a cross border smuggling attempt, and being engaged in a gun battle with yet more of Capone's mob. To the untrained eye this level might look like an *Oppo Wolf* rip-off, but crikey



Can Ness grab the ledger before he bites the bullet?

HABLES

If the poll tax worries you, spare a thought for the people caught tax dodging in the 1930s. Tax inspectors then were more likely to fill you with lead than ask you nicely to hand over the dosh. *Sean Kelly* promises to fill in his registration form just as soon as he's finished playing Ocean's brill new game *The Untouchables.*



no! 'Cos here your gunsight is viewed through a pair of binoculars at the bottom of the screen and the main aim of this section is not to puncture Capone's cronies but to shoot 50 bottles of booze within the time limit. Of course, Capone's lot get in the way, and in their own inconsiderate style, keep shooting and chucking bottles at you. Luckily for you, every so often a first aid box pops up which will restore his energy if he manages to shoot it.

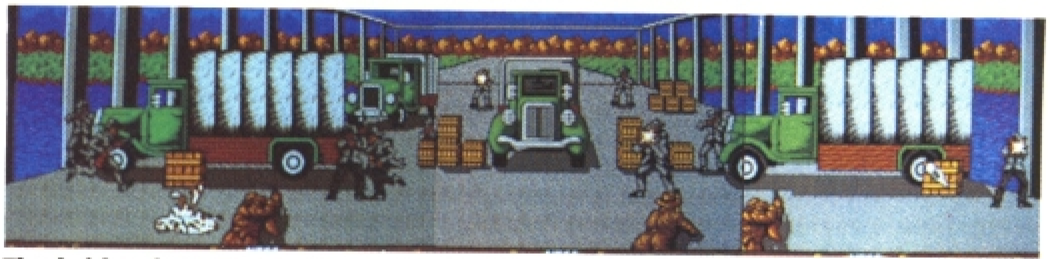
ALLEY MENTALLY

By Level Three Ness has gathered together the rest of 'ver lads' to reform his Untouchables team. But two of them are pinned down in some back alleys by Capone's men and need to be used in rotation to take on the baddies.

One of the characters must duck out from behind a wall, fire two shots, and then duck back behind for cover to reload his gun. If one sprite gets hit several times, it's best to change character, allowing the first to rebuild his energy supplies. In each alley a number of enemies must be wiped within a set time to progress onto the next alley near the train station where Capone's accountant is about to escape. In the final eighth alley, Capone himself must be taken on and beaten to progress to the next level.

BOUNCING BABIES

Yus indeed, and they don't come any bouncier than this one. Let me explain. This level is based on the railway station scene where Ness and



The bridge from level two on the Amiga, brought to you in glorious cinemazeroscope. Then there's the ST which is not half as wide or glorious as the Amiga.

Stone have to take out billions of baddies whilst preventing a baby in its pram bouncing down the stairs to its death or getting shot on the way. Baddies must be shot of course, but innocent bystanders must be avoided, as killing them will drain your energy. It's a view from above jobbie and no doubt some of you might be muttering *Commando* under your breath at the sight of this section. Well, yes, but yer intrepid Rambo type never had to do the baby sitting at the same time, did he? If you push the pram too hard or the baby gets shot, then a brilliantly gross sequence follows when the baby, splattered with blood, comes bouncing out of the pram and skids straight across the floor. Bleuch!

'THE BRAIN ARRIVING ON PLATFORM FIVE...'

This is what you might call a pico level. It's a straightforward shot blaster – again taken from the film's train station sequence. Seen from a first person perspective, Stone has just one shot to 'apprehend' (ie kill) a baddie who's taken Capone's accountant (you know, the one who's been trying to make his escape via the train station for the last two levels) hostage. Miss and the hostage buys it, hit and there's baddie brains all over the place.

THE NITTI GRITTI

Here's the last bit of mayhem – very similar to Level Three. This time Frank Nitti, Capone's main henchman, is pursued across the rooftops by Ness. Each time Ness hits Nitti, he gets a little closer to him, and Nitti is forced closer to the edge of the building. Shoot Nitti six times and he plunges over the edge, to end up, as Ness puts it in the film 'in the car.' Ho ho ho... very droll.

WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	The Untouchables
PUBLISHER	Ocean
PRICE	£24.95
FORMAT	ST/Amiga
RELEASED	December





Sean: Am I dreaming? I must be dreaming, it's just not possible. Surely no one could squeeze that much astounding playability and coding into a modest wee Amiga. Hang about, I'll pinch myself to check. YARRGH! By gonad – I'm not dreaming!

Now readers, sorry for all the drooling, but it's not often that you come across what is probably going to be remembered as the best, most original shoot 'em up ever on the Amiga. I can think of no other way of putting it – *The Untouchables* is absolutely stunning. Right now, calm down and when you're sitting comfortably I'll go through all the various aspects rationally to give you an idea why *The Untouchables* is sooooo good. Right...

Firstly, and most importantly of all, there's the gameplay. Programmers Special FX have taken some fairly old ideas for the various sections, thrown in some completely original ideas of their own, and in every case come up with thoroughly absorbing gameplay. Take the bridge section for example. Although it looks like *Operation Wolf,* rather than shooting everything in sight continually, the player spends more time rolling Ness around and avoiding being hit, whilst firing away in stacatto bursts to hit the bottles and first aid kits. The third section – the alleyway – is definitely my personal favourite. Again, a kind of *Prohibition* derivative as you guide the sights over the enemy before blasting them away, but also enhanced to improve it.

HASSLE FACTOR: 0
Usual loading between levels, but no pause for breath is unwelcome in this frenetic game.

This time the enhancement is in the fact that you're working against the clock with just two bullets to fire before being forced to duck behind the wall (for reloading). This gives the game a real sense of urgency and momentum which really had me gripped, and the little sequence showing the detail as Ness reloads each time, perfectly completes this excellent section.

And then there's the graphics. You will see from the accompanying screenshots just how excellent these are. Special FX have been working since the beginning of this year on *The Untouchables* and it certainly shows. Every section is finely detailed (just check out the detail of Ness and the pram from level four) and although it sounds pseud – I can only describe the backgrounds and sprites as 'elegant and exquisite'. (*Lordy! Ed.*)

Then, of course, you have to take into account the variety. Each of the sections stands up as a little game in its own right (with the exception of the pico level) the first being an excellent platformy ladders game, the third an outstanding *Prohibition* variation, and so on. The game also brilliantly complements the movie though that's really neither here nor there, but the fact is that the mood and atmosphere of the film are captured here as perfectly as any computer adaptation of a movie is ever likely to do.



It's difficult to explain why exactly *The Untouchables* improves on so many old game formulas in such dramatic style. Certainly screenshots don't do the playability justice. But without doubt, *The Untouchables* is the best game Ocean has ever produced, and the best game Special FX have ever programmed.

THE VERDICT

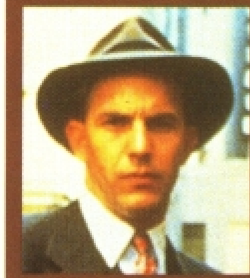
G	GRAPHICS	90
S	SOUND	94
A	ADDICTIVENESS	96
E	EXECUTION	80

• 20 • 40 • 60 • 80 • 100

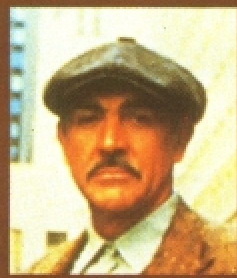
Excellent. If one game every six months were this good, then we should consider ourselves lucky, lucky, lucky.

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WHO'S WHO IN THE UNTOUCHABLES



NESS. The greatest American policeman of them all – he nicked Al Capone, captured King Kong and exposed the Watergate and Iran Contra scandals, before dying of acute leprosy in Fuengirola three months ago.



MALONE. The greatest Irish-American uniformed policeman ever. Apparently he lived on a diet of codfins and Tizer until his prolonged death which you'll can see in full, gory detail at the end of the movie.

Three Mildly Interesting *Untouchables* Facts

1 **Over 11 pints of Sainsbury's Italian Recipe tomato ketchup were used in the famous gory Malone/Sean Connery death scene.**

2 **Apparently the ex-007 spent weeks cultivating an authentic accent for his part as Malone, the streetwise Irish cop — in the end it sounded just like his James Bond and Indy Jones Snr (ie broad Scots).**

3 **Al Capone was caught and eventually sent to Devil's Island where he spent the rest of his days with his mates Steve McQueen and Dustin Hoffman, until they, er, escaped.**





All the gossip on all the major characters, with er... some 'elements' of truth.



WALLIS. The one no one can remember. He was the greatest tax collector ever since Saint Peter. Into reading tax books in a big way, he died a millionaire and bequethed his entire library to the President.



STONE. The greatest American-Italian policeman ever. He set out on a quest to find Malone, but no one told him the old bugger had been dead for years. He was later found in the Congo overcome by Candiru fish. Ouch!



I'm not saying Ness is paranoid, but keeping an eye on the statue does seem a bit over cautious.

Wallis takes on Capone in the final alley. As you can see, he's a crap shot.



ST



Jackie: You know how it is with film licences. The software companies spend so much moolah on the licences themselves, that when it comes to actually putting the game together, there's just about enough money left over to pay a programmer to program it. Thankfully though, this isn't the case with *The Untouchables*. Ocean has made a real effort to get this one right and so they should have done– 'cos they've had the licence for a year. Special FX, the authors of such stonkers as *Batman: The Caped Crusader* have done the coding and come up with the goods. *The Untouchables* is, quite simply, brill.

Several game types have been adapted to make up six levels to play through, but they all have enough new ideas and elements thrown in to destroy any suspicions of staleness. Each of the sections is perfectly self– contained but at the same time they work well together and go to make a suprisingly coherent whole. It's a brill adaptation of one of my favourite movies and just like the movie, there are moments of intense mayhem followed by quiet, tense lulls in the battling. But there's no time for finger-drumming 'cos the lulls are filled with reloading your gun or hunting for enemies lurking above, below or to the side of you, depending which level you are playing.

The graphics are outstanding in every respect – apart from the fact that the Ness sprite didn't look enough like gorgeous Kevin Costner (who played the treasury man in the movie and who could check my taxable assets any day) in my humble opinion. But overall they were amazingly detailed and thoughtfully coloured and the sprites were really smoothly animated. One thing which I did find initially, was that the game was a bit tricky to get to grips with. But once I'd got the hang of it, it really opened up and I soon found myself dribbling uncontrollably and giggling with glee as each hood got a terminal puncture.

Ocean and Special FX have really done a fantastic job and I reckon it'll be quite a while before we see a shoot 'em up and film tie- in as good as this one. Better than a concrete overcoat!

HASSLE FACTOR: 0
A big zilch. No unnecessary disk juggling, and what juggling there is more than worth it. A highly polished game in all respects.



Ness tries the old 'jump over the bullet trick' in the warehouse sequence.

THE VERDICT

G	GRAPHICS	91
S	SOUND	80
A	ADDICTIVENESS	95
E	EXECUTION	95

• 20 • 40 • 60 • 80 • 100

Without a doubt the most fun you'll have on your ST for many a year. Storm your local software emporium now!

92



"DO ME A FAVOUR...
PLUG ME INTO A SEGA"
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ALEX KIDD – HIGH TECH WORLD
GHOSTBUSTERS
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COMPO

CODPIECE CAPERS

WIN!

A demon Amstrad VCR 6000 video recorder and two movies to watch on it (*Jabberwocky* and *Time Bandits*)

PLUS

10 copies of *Onslaught* – Hewson's latest strategy game.

PLUS

A ball of Michael Palin's belly button fluff!





ABOUT THE MAIN PRIZE....

Crack open the mead and say something medieval like "A million thunders – 'tis a prize amongst prizes, I'll be bound" because guess what? Thanks to Hewson (who are celebrating the launch of *Onslaught*, their rather super slay 'em-up/strategy game set in the Middle Ages) this is actually a 'prize amongst prizes'. For a start it's really something rather modern. Something you couldn't use back in the days of old. It's a device for viewing movies in the comfort of your own home – a device which plugs into the back of any television set – a device which sits on the carpet or on a shelf. Yes, that's right – it's a video recorder!

WHAT ELSE CAN WE WIN?

Hang on, hang on. You don't know about the video yet. It's a spanking new Amstrad model with a 14-day timer, remote control and speed search and is worth 16 gold ducats and a goat (*That's 300 quid in modern money. Ed.*) And you'll also get copies of *Time Bandits* and *Jabberwocky*, which are full of filthy peasants, Monty Python stars and, erm, dwarves.
The 10 runners-up get copies of Hewson's gory new game *Onslaught* (so remember to state the type of computer you have on the coupon).

WHAT ABOUT THE BELLY BUTTON FLUFF?

This is a 'special' prize we're going to award to the person who makes the biggest hash of the competition. You can only win it if you get all the answers wrong. *Jabberwocky* star Michael Palin is, as you read this, cultivating a special crop of foul fluff in his navel – can you stand the suspense?

WHAT DO I DO?

There are six codpiece questions – all you have to do is put a 'yes' or a 'no' answer next to the relevant number on the coupon. Simple, eh?

THE QUESTIONS

1. A codpiece is an appendage like bag at the front of a man's breeches.
2. A codpiece is a tropical palm-tree which bears coconuts.
3. A codpiece is a chamber-pot.
4. A codpiece is an air compressor.
5. A codpiece composes music.
6. A codpiece is what happens when a large edible sea fish foolishly swims into a passing ship's propeller.

When you've 'racked your brains', just fill in the answers on the coupon (or a photocopy) and send in the result to Codpiece Capers Compo, ZERO, 14 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1DE.

RULES

- Any employees of Dennis Oneshots or Hewson caught entering this compo will be boiled alive in a cauldron of festering cod.
- No entries will be accepted after December 31st.
- The Editor's decision is final.

❶ ❷ ❸

❹ ❺ ❻

Name

Address

'Zip Code'

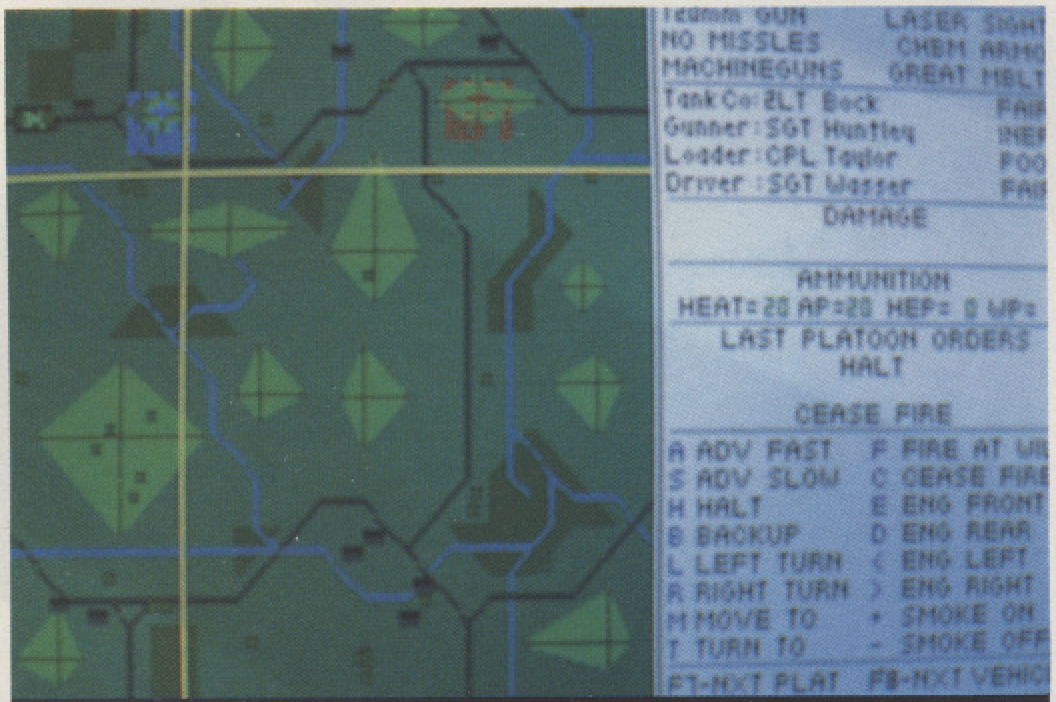
tick the relevant box:

☐ **I own an Amiga** ☐ **I own a PC** ☐ **I own an ST**
☐ **I own a hedgehog called Maurice**

review

M1 TANK PLATOON

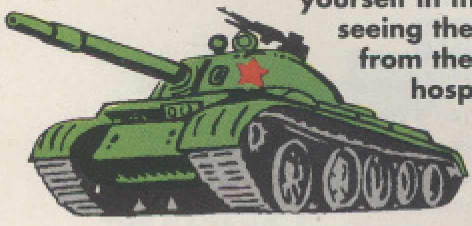
The Third World War. Now there's a scenario and a half for you – and, as per usual, Microprose seems to be at the helm. And so does *Duncan MacDonald*, as he tries to get to grips with four M1A1 Battle Tanks... getting killed about three hundred times for his troubles.



Here's the map screen. You're going to be using this quite a lot, as this is a strategy game as much as an arcade game. It shows you the positions of the enemy strongholds, hills and all kinds of 'stuff'. Tres useful. Crucial, actually.

World War Three has broken out (again), and it's all Gorby's fault (as usual). There's a lot of action going on at 'the battlefront', and, basically, you're in the thick of it. You're a tank commander you see, and you're in charge of not just one tank, but four. (And a plethora of other vehicles and aircraft too numerous to mention).

To explain exactly what you can do in this simulation would be impossible given the space (the manual that accompanies the game is a biggy, even by Micropose standards – it weighs about the same as a bag of sugar). But rest assured that everything you'd need to do in a real battle situation, you CAN do here (apart from shooting yourself in the foot and seeing the fight out from the safety of a hospital bed, surrounded by loads of sylph-like nurses).



WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	M1 Tank Platoon
PUBLISHER	Microprose
PRICE	£39.95
FORMAT	PC
RELEASED	Out now

PC

Dunc: Tanks!!! They're like cars really, aren't they? They're just a bit bigger. And they're a bit heavier, with loads of armour-plating all over the place. And, um, they've got lots of guns and things. And they haven't got tyres, either, they've got caterpillar tracks. Hmmm. On second thoughts tanks aren't very much like cars at all, are they? (*No. Ed.*) I'd better start again then. (*Good idea. Ed.*)

Tanks!!! They're not like cars at all. And therefore a tank game isn't like a car game. All you have to worry about in a car game is the accelerator, the brake and the steering wheel – and by juggling correctly between these three things you can hopefully stay on 'the track'. In a tank game you have a few more things to occupy your mind. In fact you have about eight billion more things to occupy it.

THE TANK CREW

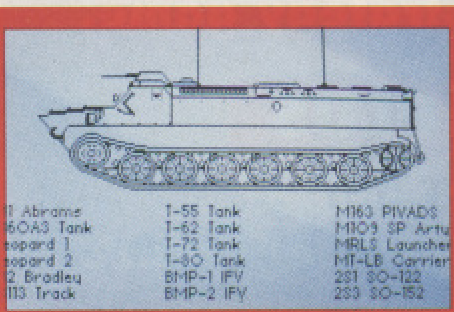
Each tank is manned by four people: the Driver (who steers it), the Gunner (who aims the cannon), the Loader (who has the boring job of sticking projectiles into the cannon) and the Tank Commander (who's in charge of the whole shooting match). You play all of these chaps, meaning that, in total, you control the actions of 16 people. It's a nightmare the first time you play – but with time spent between the manual and the practice area, things eventually start to become second nature.

THE PRACTICE AREA

The practice area is based on the Narfenauer Gunnery Range in Germany (where tank drivers try different manoeuvres and fire live ammunition at realistic targets in an area of 60,000 acres). You can choose to have either static or moving targets, and the brilliant thing is that they don't fire back at you.

Your tanks can be split up, moved apart from each other over as wide an area as necessary, and toggled between at will. To begin with you can leave three of them on 'autopilot' and just control the team leader – the others will follow you around blindly (fools!).

Switching to overhead map view, you can suss out the terrain (hills, rivers and roads) and find the location of the enemy posts. Then you decide on which tactics to adopt in order to get near enough to blow them into the middle of next week. The fact that they don't fire at you, may make this operation sound straightforward, but it isn't. With flight sims you can orient yourself by gaining altitude and peering from your cockpit. Not so in *Tank Platoon*. Being stuck down on the ground is a different barrow of vegetables altogether – and getting your bearings means using the map properly. You can (using the movable cross hairs) denote specific co–ordinates for your tank (or tanks) to trundle to, leaving you time to summon up the host of sub-screens – such as the radio request screen where you can call for reconnaissance or air/ground support. In a way, the map screen is like a strategy game all by itself – the



Ho hum. I'm meant to plough through the manual to find out what vehicle this is but I can't be bothered, so I'll guess instead. Erm, It's a Ford Granada. Nope? Erm Vauxhall Cavalier? (etc. etc.)

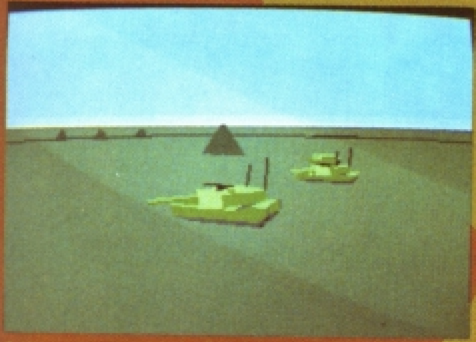
wonderful thing being that as soon as the tactics have been worked out, you can actually place yourself right in the thick of the action to make sure the 'fine tuning' is carried out to perfection. (*Or in Duncan's case uselessly. Ed.*)

GOING TO WAR

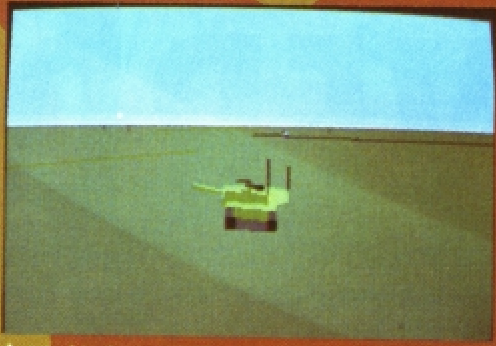
Ahem: this is where things start to get rather tricky – the training run is over. Having defined various parameters, (strength and aptitude of the enemy, battle scenario etc.) you get briefed on the whereabouts of Johnny Ruskie's strongholds and are given orders to take out (or hold) certain positions. You're then plunged into total bloody war. Things fire at you, so you can be killed.

Spend a while on the map screen plotting your advance, and then plunge

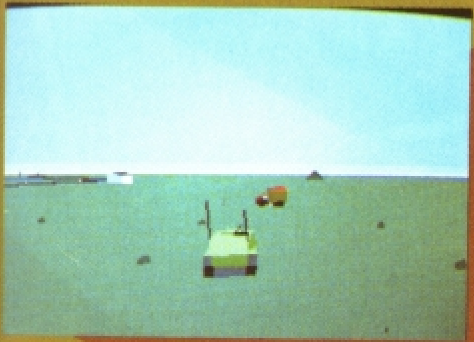
FOUR GO MAD IN THE COUNTRY...



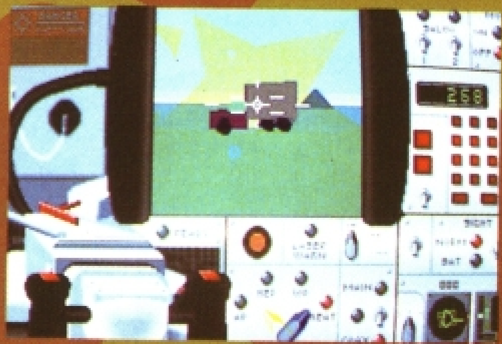
▲ There I am, all alone in the countryside. I said I'd meet Algy, Bert and the lads here, but they haven't shown up yet (the scoundrels). Oh dear, I suppose I'm just going to have to hang around waiting for them again.



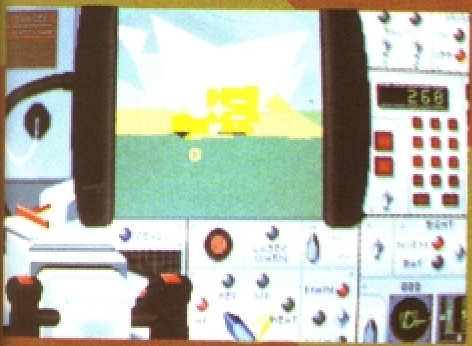
▲ Hip hip hooray! There are my faithful chums! Come on chaps, let's trundle around and engage in some jolly antics (and a bit of serious World War III-type carnage too). Last one to blow something up is a silly sausage!



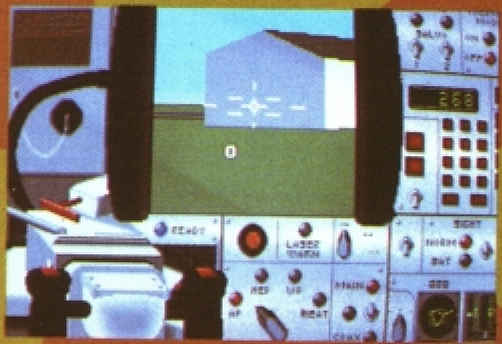
▲ Yipadee doo dah! That one's mine. I'll just have a quick word with Albert the gunner. Oy, wake up Bert, it's your turn to do something – here's my brilliant plan. (Whisper whisper whisper whisper). Hee hee hee.



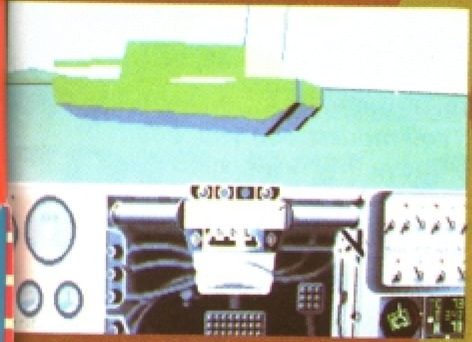
▲ Go on Bert, do it now. Go on. Do it. Look, I'm in charge here, and if I tell you to do something then you blinking well do it ruddy well sharpish, matey. He hasn't got any guns to shoot you back with, anyway. DO IT!!



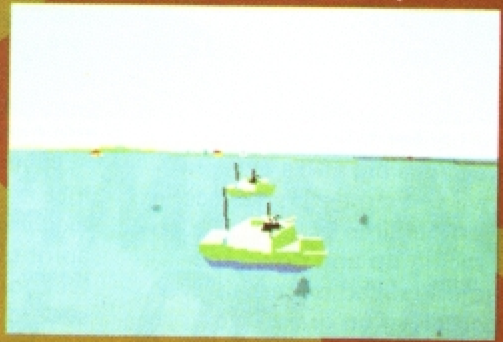
▲ Well done old man. See? It wasn't hard at all, was it. Anyway, it's my turn now – hand over the gun controls. Whaddya mean, "no", it's MY TURN. Hand over the controls now. This instant. I'm not joking, you know....



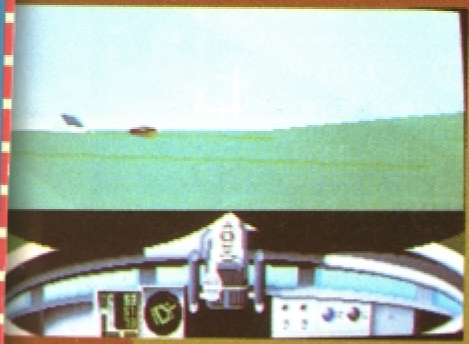
▲ Thank you very much (I don't think). Right. I'm going to destroy that house now – um, which button do I press to make a bomb come out of that long tube thingy on the front? Tell me. Whaddya mean, "it's a secret"? TELL ME!!!



Right! If you don't tell me then I'm going to blow up Peter's tank. Whaddya mean, I can't blow it up if I don't know which button to press? You gunners all think you're so bloody clever, don't you?



▲ Well well well, look over there. It's the enemy in the distance, and if you don't shoot them quickly enough they'll shoot us. That means I'm going to get to see which button you use anyway. Ha ha ha!



▲ Aha. That put paid to them – and I know which button to use now! Righto, let's all trundle up to the top of this hill. Cooor, look at the view from here! Oy, Bert, look – that's my Auntie Nora's house over there.



▲ No, no, no, no, no! No you can't! Look, I absolutely forbid it! ...I don't care – you're just going to have to go in your trousers or something, aren't you. Cripes. Who's that over there? Oh, it's Peter. Hello chum.

HASSLE FACTOR: 3

Lots of disk swapping, but that seems to be par for the course with Microprose. More annoying is the scenario and jingoism: good old America v. the Commie Bastards of Russia. It doesn't worry *me* much, but some people will be forced to pretend that they're playing the Animal Liberation Front versus Conrad Furs (the Fur Coat People). Which makes it even more fun...

yourself inside the tank. All the gunners, when not directly under your control, will automatically home in on the nearest and most dangerous enemy – so you can give a 'fire at will' order (press key 'F') and worry about driving the tank (or tanks) to the spot you reckon is best.

There are hills in the game (thank God!), and it's a good idea to keep these between you and the enemy. A slow trundle across three miles of flat, open ground is *not* a good idea. Keep a wide berth, and go for a hull-down position at the top of a hill. This means keeping most of the tank hidden behind the brow of the hill, with just the turret and the cannon sticking out over the top: it makes you hard to hit. Mind you, the enemy seems to engage in a lot of this hull-down malarkey as well, so how on earth do you get behind them without getting shot to ribbons? Aha! Um – I don't know, actually. A long solo trek around the perimeter of the battlefield might work. Or maybe it's better to stay put and call for an air-strike over the radio. Oh dear, all this responsibility for one so inept. Oh no, another member of my platoon has just been blown to smithereens. Sorry chaps.

THE 'UPSHOT'

M1 Tank Platoon is one of those simulations that Microprose seems to excel in producing. It's demanding, it's atmospheric, it's extremely addictive and astoundingly 'deep'. It also has a manual the size of Ayers Rock – which has to be read, so, if you're the kind of person who likes jumping straight into a game and working things out by trial and error, you might be in for a shock. I certainly was. Now, where's the bloody manual gone? I need to read pages 56 to 198 again.

THE VERDICT

G	GRAPHICS	86
S	SOUND	80
A	ADDICTIVENESS	94
E	EXECUTION	92

• 20 • 40 • 60 • 80 • 100

As expected from Microprose, this is a real 'in depth' sim. It's corking good 'fun' to play, but the necessity to read the 200 trillion page manual might put some of you off.

88

STOP

AMIGA A

POWER DRIFT

Sean Kelly **may be to driving skills what Nigel Mansell is to method-acting but that didn't stop him taking *Power Drift* out for a test spin and living to tell the tale...**

Life is a little like playing *Power Drift*. You have your ups and downs, your lefts and rights, and sometimes you darn well don't know which way to turn. Then, to top it all, there are those shocking moments when you hit a bump so hard you go flying up into the air and wish you'd put on your pair of brown trousers after all.

As you probably know (unless you're as thick as Heinz Country Vegetable Soup), *Power Drift* – the arcade game involved racing a buggy around 25 incredibly bendy tracks, whose height above sea level changed from second to second, and er... that was it. Apart from the massively undulating track, impressively fast graphics and mean-looking cabinet, *Power Drift* – the Activision game – is pretty much the same. So, take away the cabinet and what are you left with?

Well, a pretty darn rootin' tootin' good racer – that's what. Programmer ZZKJ, author of the brilliant *Super Hang On* on 16-bits has done an amazing job capturing the graphics, speed and spirit of the arcade version. The first thing that strikes you is the sheer speed and smoothness of the billions of trackside objects scrolling towards you. Occasionally things move so fast that you can't tell the direction you have to head for next, which makes the game a little frustrating at times.

All the original's different track surfaces seem to be there and the varying effects they have on your vehicle at different points during the races have been kept. There's also a huge variety of tracks, 25 in all, broken down into five sequences of five tracks. The range of background scenery is also massive, from big cities at night-time to snowy Christmassy-style scenes – just right for this time of year. The impression of racing up and down the hills has also translated extremely well, and when cornering on gravel, you really do get the feeling that the car is slip slidin' away round the bend.

Control is by joystick, keyboard or mouse and like *Super Hang On*, I found the mouse to be the most responsive method of control, although it did take some getting used to. Soundwise, there's an effective digitised "First lap... second lap..." etc each time you cross the line for a new lap and some fab skiddy and crashing sounds throughout. Alas, they've also kept that really annoying ditty which plays interminably. Hopefully, a button to turn this off exists somewhere, but I didn't find it.

Luckily though, a lot of attention has been played to the little details. For example, if you crash just before a steep bank, you find it difficult to get any speed up at first as you are attempting to restart on the bank. Similarily if you are going under a bridge and any of the other buggies happen to be passing over it at the time, you see them zipping across the screen. Although this doesn't add to the gameplay, these sorts of little details can add a great deal to the appeal and staying power of a game. Possibly a good job in this case, as I found it fairly easy to get through the first tracks, and suspect that it won't take most gamesplayers that long to finish the game. *(You modest dog you. Ed.)*

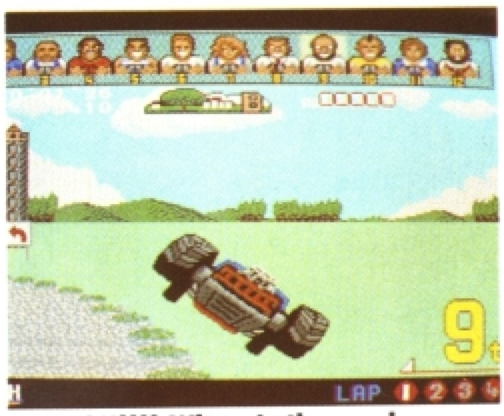
With the above tiny reservation taken into account, *Power Drift* is still an excellent conversion. The graphics and spirit of the original have been captured well for the Amiga release, so you should definitely jump in your buggy and head for the local software shop as fast as your little wheels will carry you. It's a stonker of a game.



Hold on to your stomach... it's take-off time again.



Pick a driver, any driver. Free set of racing circuits with every driver chosen.



AAARGH!!!! Where's the road gone!!???! I knew I should have hit that bump slower.

HASSLE FACTOR: 0
Each track loads in so ultra fast, that there's hardly any faffing about.

GRAPHICS 85	ADDICTIVENESS 80	OVERALL 85
SOUND 87	EXECUTION 87	

WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	Power drift
PUBLISHER	Activision
PRICE	£24.95
FORMAT	Amiga
RELEASED	November

VIRGIN's SANTA

FREE GAMES THIS WAY

Don't miss out on an extra special stocking this Christmas when Santa be awarding the lucky winners with:

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£1,000 worth of software of your choice, or an Amiga or ST plus £500 w of software of your choice

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Any one of the six Virgin Games arcade classics mentioned earlier.

MAKE SURE SANTA VISITS YOU TWICE THIS YEAR!

HERE WE GO! ....

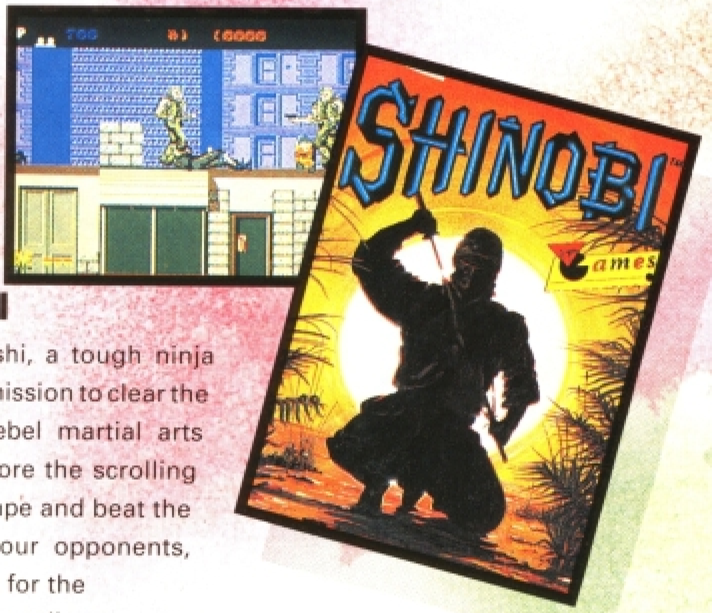
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Virgin Games have decided to become a Santa and hand out £30,000 worth of fabulous goodies. All you have to do to gain from Santa's generosity is to buy any three of these games:

- **SHINOBI**
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- **GEMINI WING**
- **CONTINENTAL CIRCUS**
- **SILKWORM**
- **NINJA WARRIORS**

Simply collect three tokens - you'll find one in each game - and send them to Virgin Games. The prize draw will take place on 29th January 1990.

discover why!



SHINOBI

You're masashi, a tough ninja warrior on a mission to clear the town from rebel martial arts fanatics. Explore the scrolling urban landscape and beat the hell out of your opponents, but watch out for the end-of-level guardians.



SILKWORM

It's not true! Even after months of negotiation with the Ruskies and despite a mass exodus out of Afghanistan, we're still under threat. There's no one left to press the Nuke button so the battle has switched to copters and plane. Non-stop shoot-'em-up arcade action.



CONTINENTAL CIRCUS

Compete in formula one races in Brazil, America, France, Monaco, Germany, Spain and Japan, Race hard, but watch out for other cars. Colliding can be fatal. And do visit the pits for fuel and repairs.

GEMINI WING

The aliens have had enough. They're not going to take their brethren being blasted on computer screen any more. So they've come down in their hordes to blast the pitiful race of carbon-based life forms called humans. Can you stop them? Somebody has to do it.



NINJA WARRIORS



Can you survive brutal enemy onslaught? Fight with hand, foot and dagger to rid the street of the scum that dare infest your home town. A classic arcade conversion.



DOUBLE DRAGON II

Ferocious two-player simultaneous martial arts mayhem. Evil fiends have captured your girlfriend - it's up to you and your brother to rescue her. Don't fail. Through the town, countryside, mountains and finally into the lair. Use whatever weapons you can find to stay alive.

ALL AVAILABLE ON

AMIGA	**£19.99**
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C64 DISK	**£14.99**
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SPECTRUM CASS	**£9.99**
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Virgin Games

VIRGIN GAMES
2-4 VERNON YARD
119 PORTOBELLO ROAD
LONDON W11 2DX

WIBBLES

A joystick is a joystick is a joystick... right? Wrong! As anyone who's ever had a fire button go phutt at the crucial moment knows, you're only as good as your leaf switches. But how to sort out the beasts from the best? There's only one way. To lock *John Minson* and ten ever so slightly phallic controllers in a room until just one emerges the winner.



SURESHOT DESIGNER JOYSTICK: Starts as a pile of bits, ends up as an ice lolly



MICROBLASTER: Has an interesting guarantee slip



MACH 1: "And here's one th... like a potato, Esther..."



NAVIGATOR: Looks butch, but a mite "under-endowed"



SPEEDKING: Pain stops play



WIZMASTER: A well weird one



COMPETITION PRO EXTRA: A triple X-rated jobby



CHALLENGER: Cheap and, erm, dodgy...



COMMAND MODULE: Better than its barf-bag styling suggests

STICKS!



CRUISER: Vile yuppie version also available



SURESHOT DESIGNER JOYSTICK



£9.95/Sonmax

Here's one I built earlier... Most joysticks end up as a pile of bits but this one starts that way. There's always something satisfying about a good screw, I thought as I fixed the top of the casing to its base. Even though it's easy-peasy to slip wires onto micro-switches you're left with a certain sense of achievement. This isn't just any joystick – it's your joystick, lovingly crafted with your sweat, blood, tears... As a proud parent you'll be happy to know it contains four micro-switches with a leaf switch for the single fire button and that the stick shaft seems fairly heavy duty. The grip is a little small for large paws but the button is sensibly placed for right or left handers. As to the general appearance though... blechh! It looks more like a nasty ice-lolly than a hi-tech alien zapper!

NAVIGATOR



£14.99/Konix

In keeping with its innovative approach to hand-jobs, Konix comes up with a a *Star Trek* view of 25th century design (ie slightly sixties looking). Still, it makes sense. The contoured handle sits snugly in either hand, leaving your forefinger free to tap away on the front-mounted fire button. Above decks it's rather less well thought out. How to put this politely... erm, the shaft is tiny. Still, they do say it's not the size but what you do with it!

Construction is as solid as you'd expect from Konix, with a proper micro-switch for the fire button. There's also an auto-fire feature. Despite its sinuous curves it looks decidedly butch, and kindly Konix has included a second connector so that if you have a Spectrum +2 or +3 and are feeling masochistic, you can still use the stick.

WIZMASTER



£12.99/Spectravideo

This is the sort of thing that console players are supposed to love. A strange little box containing two fire buttons and a control pad. If you've never tried using one I'd seriously suggest you do so before buying. Some people can never get to grips with the tiniest touch sending their spaceshift shooting off to the left.

Thoughtfully, QuickShot has included a couple of screw-in handles. There's a tiny, half inch knob resembling a pawn from a chess set and a slightly longer (2") ribbed handle. The latter is surprisingly comfortable, but only if you use your left hand for steering (or don't mind working with crossed hands).The WizMaster can be used as a table top model or in your palm. Construction seems solid enough but the cable's on the short side. The response of both the control pad and fire buttons is distinctly spongy – rather like an old Speccy's rubber keyboard. There's an autofire switch and the second button is marked turbo for superfast firepower. Strangest of all is the 'multi-system adapter with mode switch'. Sounds impressive, but it's just a small switched unit which lets you choose between Atari, Commodore and Sega or Amstrad and MSX. Quite why it's detachable escapes me!

MACH 1



£10.99/Cheetah

Like Konix, Cheetah has been making joysticks almost as long as there have been home computers. The Mach I is a standard, table-top device with fire buttons at every possible point. There are a couple more buttons on the base unit – if you want to use your toes, nose or any other extremity, you'll be able to blast away with this one. And to add to the ferocity of your firepower, there's an autofire switch. The fire buttons have a clattery micro-switch feel but the auto-fire selector is a dodgy looking slide switch. The trigger grip is a good size and nicely contoured for average sized hands. Response is on the fluid side with a fairly long travel and a slow return to the centre. The base is small enough to be hand held but the cable is decidedly short at less than four feet.

COMPETITION PRO EXTRA



£16.49/Dynamics

If you're a sophisticated games player you'll want to slip into this sexy little see-through number before you settle down for an evening of thoroughly adult alien blasting on a bearskin rug in front of a blazing log fire. Sensuously caress its twin, microswitch fire buttons and... (*Take a cold shower, Minson! Ed.*)

The Extra in the Competition Pro's monicker is more than just the transparent plastic body. It also features a three-way switch on the front for normal, auto-fire and most intriguingly, slow motion. This allows you to reduce the speed of your character with the joystick, which may have its uses in platform games for those tight manouevres but sounds positively kamikaze in a shoot 'em up.

The stick's response is a trifle stiff and instead of the standard issue suction cups it has flat, rubbery base pads. These stop it sliding but don't keep it from bouncing all over the place during a really frantic bout of stick wiggling. It's also rather bulky to be hand-held for any length of time.

SPEEDKING

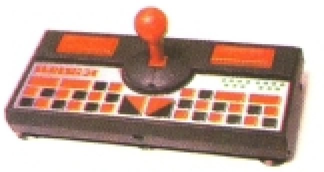


£10.99/Konix

I know a lot of people who love this totally unique hand-held. You grip it in your left paw, curling your forefinger round the base to tap away at a seriously light-touch, micro-switch fire button. That leaves your mitt free to manipulate the stubby little shaft. Despite its small size (just 2") this has a surprisingly long travel and the clicks of the switches are reassuringly positive.

Like I say, there are SpeedKing fans who wouldn't use anything else. But... (didn't you just know there was a 'but') I just can't get to grips (ho, ho, ho) with the thing. It's fine for the first few minutes but then a dull ache develops in my wrist. Five more minutes and the cramps set in. Pretty soon the aliens are invading because I can't hold it any more. That said, it's a solid handful and feels built to last – no good for cack-handers, though.

COMMAND MODULE



£17.95/Sureshot

My, this is a big bugger! A whopping 10.75" by 4.75". Can't wait to look inside! (Screw, screw, lever, wrench.) Wow! The ultimate space age technology – as in lots of space. Thin air. The Command Module is a classic case of packaging gone wild.

Or maybe not. Ignore the (quote) 'attractive label simulating computer keyboard' (Do these people seriously believe this barf-bag silver sticker is anything other than an offence against aesthetics?). The large, oblong, micro-switch fire buttons allow you to get the sort of rapid fire rhythm only usually obtained by inducing a severe case of the shakes in your wrist. And the oversize base provides a handy rest.

The stick itself is fairly stubby though not objectionably so, with a positive grip and short travel. There's also an auto-fire switch hidden away on the front. Construction sounds fairly rattly – but then again, it would with all that echoing space inside.



CHALLENGER

£4.99/Cheetah

Cheap and cheerful or bargain basement bullshit? This is certainly a challenger for the smallest table-top model, with its 3.25" by 3" base and 3.5" pistol grip. Cheetah still manages to cram in two fire buttons, on the top of the handle and to the left of the base unit. But don't think that it'll double as a hand held, at least not unless you're prepared to rip off the suction cups.

The saving in production costs isn't merely in plastic though. The absence of micro-switches helps keep the price down. It also means the Challenger has a far less positive feel to it. The fire buttons are particularly 'flat' and the stick seems to glide rather than click. I dissected the specimen to discover the 'works' consists of a circuit board with a clover shaped piece of metal above it, which makes contact as the stick is moved. This is hardly the most reliable form of switching; however, it does have an advantage in that repairs are possible if the contacts become dodgy.



THE CRUISER

£9.99/Powerplay

There is, in the world of marketing, something called the USP - the unique selling point. The Cruiser has a USP: namely, a "3-way power control for extra sensitivity". To change the response you hold the stick upside down, tug on the handle and swivel its collar to one of three settings - a classic case of requiring a third hand. While it does loosen the touch it's still fairly stiff at the lightest setting. Apart from this The Cruiser's a fairly standard, table-top stick, which could be hand-held. Twin fire buttons make it well-suited for either hand; they're micro switches with a nice, positive feel. It's also available in a vile yuppie pastel coloured version. Blech!



MICROBLASTER

£12.95/Replay

I like the guarantee slip that comes with this one. If it doesn't work it suggests you 'Check your MicroBlaster is connected to your computer.' Technical stuff, eh?

It's a surprisingly heavy stick for its compact size, with the usual twin fire buttons on the base and a raised handle with a short, rather stiff action. The fire buttons are micro-switched but have a loose feel and are small, so you'll have to be accurate; still, there's an auto-fire switch hidden snugly beneath the case.

The shape of the base makes it less than suitable for hand-held use and because it skimps on suction pads it has a tendency to jump off the table during frantic manouevres. The box claims that the cable is an extra long 1.4m. Being a Doubting Thomas who doesn't hold with all this metrification I whipped out my trusty twelve inches and measured it at under four feet. That's 1.2m, even including the D-plug. Naughty, naughty.

INTO BATTLE

Your average joystick has to deal with many types of game before it becomes a pile of wire and funny plastic bits resembling a modern 'sculpture' (only not quite as valuable). So we tested our ten wibbly things on three totally different formats to see how they coped...

THE SHOOT 'EM UP



ACTION FIGHTER (Firebird)

This straightforward scrolling shoot 'em up calls for lots of left-right action but also sensitive up-down control for the throttle, and fast fire to wipe out the enemy road users. The **MicroBlaster**'s slack response was well suited to the game and its auto-fire came in useful but the slightly loose feel to the fire buttons was disconcerting. The **Competition Pro Extra**'s auto-fire didn't work here but its slow-down feature did - making the game impossible to play! In normal fire mode it performed okay with nice steering but nippy acceleration. By way of contrast, Cheetah's **Mach I** was far too free, sending my bike skidding all over the shop. The auto-fire didn't work, either. Ironically the same firm's cheapie, the **Challenger**, scored slightly higher with its sluggish, leaf-switch responses but the rattly fire button was impossible. Perhaps this called for big-jobs. The king-size **Command Module**'s huge buttons didn't seem to help that much so I switched to auto-fire, which did. The adjustable **Cruiser**'s stiffest steering proved unsuitable for nippy manoeuvering and while the slackest setting made dodging easy, acceleration was abrupt. The mid-setting was much more pleasant. The real surprise was the **WizMaster**; with the short shaft fitted it was possible to get some extremely fast reactions. The auto-fire worked as well. As I expected, the Konix **SpeedKing** left me with an aching wrist but before pain stopped play its stick gave a nice fast steering response. The **Navigator**'s handle solved the holding problem but it was hard getting a fast rate of fire with the front-mounted button (auto-fire worked fine). A bigger problem was the stubby handle; I need something proper to grasp. That only left my hand-crafted **Sureshot Designer** model. Well, it worked but not quite as I'd hoped. My bike skidded across the road like an ice-skater. At the end of round one I had my preferences sorted out and topping the table were the **Cruiser** and **WizMaster**, with honourable mentions for the **Command Module** and **Navigator**. Time to load the next game...

THE BEAT 'EM UP



STREET FIGHTER (US Gold)

Nothing like a beat 'em up to test a joystick's mettle – you need a nice positive fire action for all those body blows. Surprisingly, the shandy-drinking **Designer** stick proved surprisingly butch here. My street fighter was leaping about like a ballet dancer. The **Cruiser** came unstuck though; even on its lightest setting the action suggested my martial artist needed a lie-in, while the tight responses on the **Competition Pro Extra**'s stick made it difficult to flow through all the diagonals required for a nice fluid fight. Once again the **Challenger** failed to live up to its name, producing an extremely rheumatic performance. Cheetah's **Mach I** certainly broke the 'ouch' barrier though, with its easy movement allowing my man to carve up the competition. Surprisingly, the **MicroBlaster** also allowed an acrobatic display despite its short travel. The **Navigator**'s reaction time was too slow to take me far round the world, and while the **SpeedKing** performed better it left my hand feeling like a troop of Ninja had danced upon it. Far better was the tiny pad of the **WizMaster**; when I added one of the screw-in sticks, it proved ideal, far outscoring everything else. After this the massive **Command Module** seemed somewhat bulky but still turned in a good performance, though not quite accurate enough. So round two produced a clear winner, the **WizMaster**, followed by the **Mach I, MicroBlaster**, **Designer** and **Command Module**.

THE SPORTS SIM

CALIFORNIA GAMES (Epyx)

For the final round it's a return ticket to sunny California - all right, smoggy London town. For the ultimate test of any stick - the sports simulation. Precise timing on the fire button for those skateboard manouevres, accurate positioning to catch the footbag - and a bit of joystick jiggling for the BMX. This time the **WizMaster** consigned itself to the realm of the couch potatoes. The fire action was too soft for spot on positioning and the short stick just didn't cut it. I'd hate to use this for a real stick waggler such as Daley Thompson! Cheetah's little **Challenger** was surprisingly useful when its stiff action helped with accuracy but was a dog when it came to fast movement. The Konix **Navigator** failed to take me further than Luton airport as the stick stuck and refused to return to centre. It was retired to the injury bench. No such problems with the **SpeedKing**, which provided a nice combination of accuracy and easy movement. Pumped full of hormones the **Command Module** produced a commanding



performance. The short, easy travel on the stick helped accuracy and easy control. Definitely a dude. Every parent likes to cheer their child at sportsday but the leaf spring on the **Designer**'s fire button let down its split-second timing. The loose stick wasn't as bad as I expected but I reckon Daley Thompson would destroy it.

Time for a stiffy. (*Open the windows first! Ed.*) Unfortunately the **Competition Pro Extra**'s short travel made it impossible to whack up the BMX speed and the fire buttons felt generally unresponsive. Still, its slo-mo came in useful on the half-pipe! (*Cheat! Ed.*) It was back to bruised knees with the **MicroBlaster** but its slightly freer action gave it the edge in most other events. Not quite awesome but fairly far out... maaan. Cheetah's slack action **Mach I** made for easy jiggling and by really ramming it around it's possible to get truly rad. However, the auto-fire caused problems, locking on when it said it was off. The very Californian sounding **Cruiser**'s three way sensitivity setting was well useful, though it was still not ideally suited to wild waggling.

Rounding up for the third time, there's no obvious winner but the best appear to be the **Speed King**, **Command Module** and **Cruiser** with honourable mentions to the **MicroBlaster** and **Mach I** (plus **Comp Pro Extra**'s cheat ability!)

So it's make your mind up time... and I can't! Let's face it, just as there's horses for courses, there's sticks for software. It depends whether you want pixel accuracy or real, ram home action. And it depends on your taste.

Of the six traditional sticks the **Cruiser**'s variable touch control was nice but not quite variable enough in all circumstances. A nice price though. The **Competition Pro Extra**'s slo-mo cheat can be useful but I didn't like its stiff response. The **MicroBlaster** was a good general purpose stick with a fairly stiff motion while the **Mach I** provides an easier movement plus oodles of fire buttons. Maybe too slack and slight doubts about its construction though. Cheetah's **Challenger** was unlikely to last forever but it's extremely cheap; erratic responses though. Finally the home grown **Designer** is lots of fun to build but less handy in action. It's unbelievably loose and hardly feels robust. Limited usefulness.

Konix's two sticks are interesting variations on the theme. I was surprised by the **Navigator**'s failure, but it is covered by a 12 month guarantee (as are many of the other sticks). Its stubby handle ruled it out for me. Similarly the **SpeedKing** is a nice performer if you can get your hand round it.

The **Command Module** seems more suited to five year olds who want their computer decks to look impressive but peel off the silvery sticker and you have a worthy, if not outstanding stick. It's also costly. The **WizMaster** almost converted me to joypads, especially with the longer handle screwed in. I could probably get to like this.

Still, I can't see any one of these satisfying me. My advice would be to buy a couple if you can, perhaps a stiff, traditional stick and the **WizMaster** or even an ultra-loose cheapie for when you need it. Then you'll always be equipped, whatever the software publishers decide to throw at you!



JOYSTICK	PRICE	DISTRIBUTOR	FIRE BUTTONS	CORD LENGTH	GUARANTEE
CHALLENGER	£4.99	Cheetah	2	46"	1 YEAR
COMMAND MODULE	£17.95	Sureshot	2	61"	1 YEAR
COMPETITION PRO EXTRA	£16.49	Dynamics	2	61"	2 YEARS
THE CRUISER	£9.99	Powerplay	2	58"	1 YEAR
MACH 1	£10.99	Cheetah	4	44"	1 YEAR
MICROBLASTER	£12.95	Replay	2	45"	1 YEAR
NAVIGATOR	£14.99	Konix	1	64"	1 YEAR
SPEEDKING	£10.99	Konix	1	64"	1 YEAR
SURESHOT DESIGNER JOYSTICK	£9.95	Sonmax	1	62"	NOT AVAILABLE
WIZMASTER	£12.99	Spectravideo	2	49"	1 YEAR

CONTACTS

CHEETAH MARKETING: Norbury House, Norbury Rd, Fairwater, Cardiff CF5 3AS
DYNAMICS MARKETING: New Coin Street, Royton, Oldham OL2 6JZ
KONIX: Unit 35, Rassau Industrial Estate, Ebbw Vale, Gwent NP3 5SD
POWERPLAY: Slackote Lane, Delph, Oldham OL3 5TW
REPLAY: Jubilee Drive, Loughborough, Leics LE11 0XS
SONMAX: Units 1-4, 1 Wakefield Road, Drighlington, Nr Bradford, W. Yorkshire BD11 1DH
SPECTRAVIDEO: Unit 27, Northfield Industrial Estate, Beresford Avenue, Wembley, Middx HA0 1NU

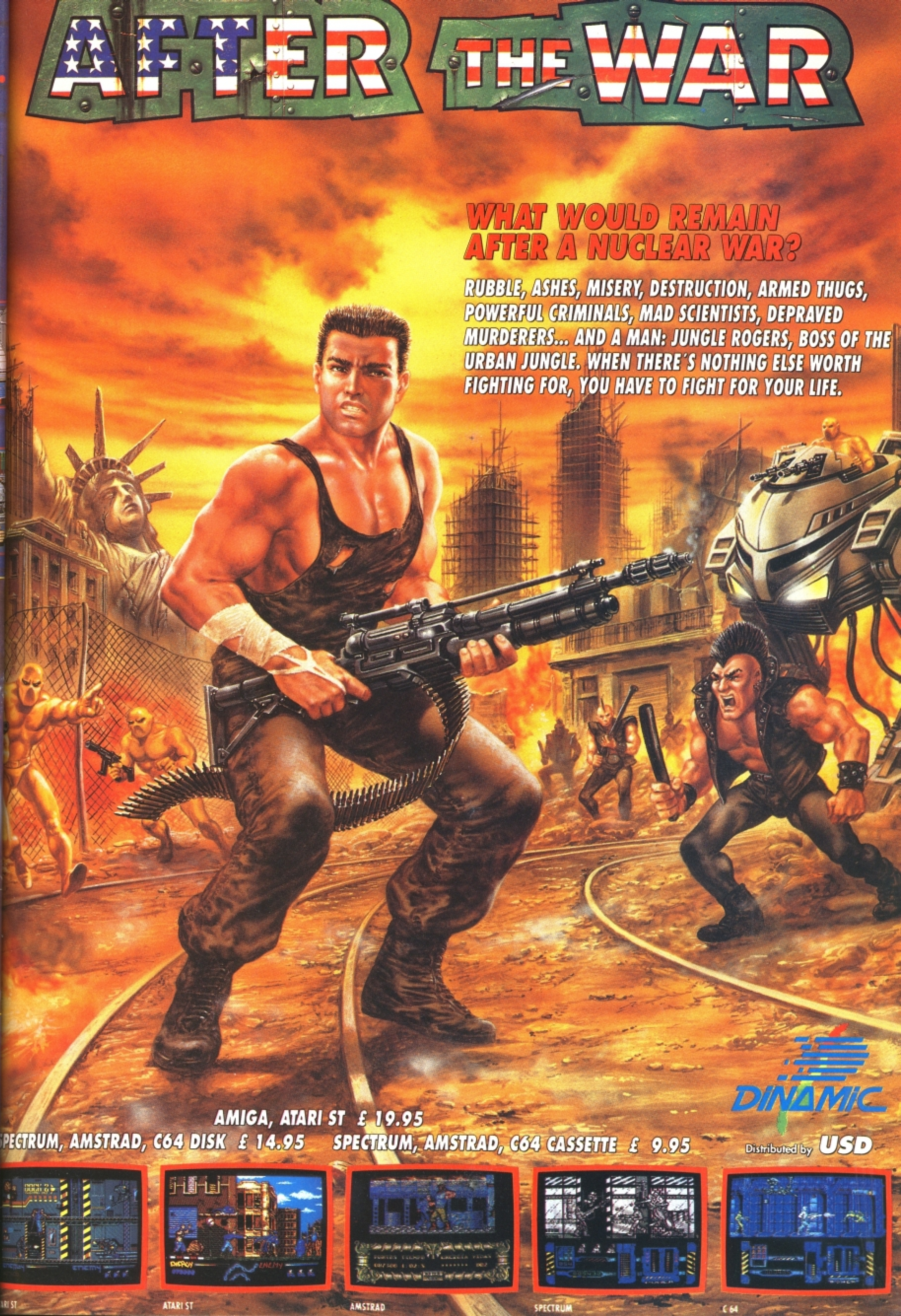


A joystick needn't be joystick shaped. The QuickJoy V (currently unavailable owing to the situation in China, it says here!) was a real mega unit complete with built in clock, so you could time eggs while playing Wicked. Voltmace has an Amiga controller in the shape of plane yokes for flight simulators.

But why stop there? The Nintendo console has spawned a whole series of natty ideas including a footpad for running games or computerised version of that old party favourite, Twister (well, it's still a favourite round our house. You should try the nude version!). Also for the Nintendo there's something called the U-Force which lets you shadow box against on-screen characters. And best of all is the Power Glove which interprets hand movements into commands. NASA has something similar but the Nintendo version will be several squillion squid cheaper. Whether any of these innovations will make it to computers remains to be seen. It's to be hoped so!

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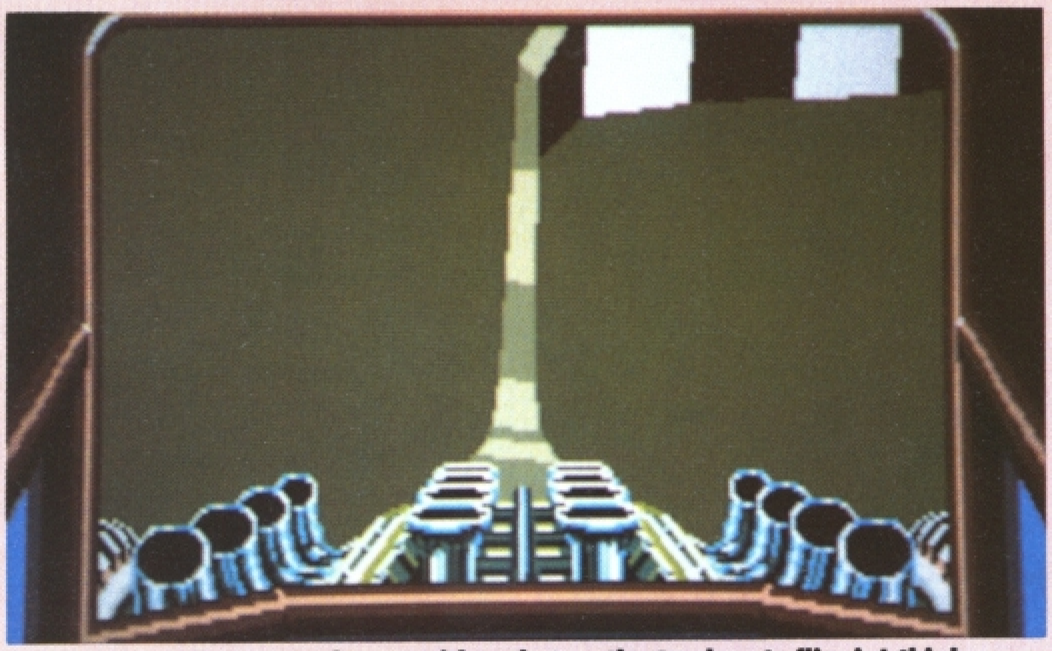
STUNT CAR RACER

Question: What do you get when you cross a high speed car racing game with a roller coaster ride?
Answer: The contents of your stomach all over your lap... or *Duncan MacDonald's* lap in this case. He popped to the bathroom, changed his trousers and joined *Sean Kelly* to take a more in-depth look at MicroStyle's new vroomer...

ZERO HERO

Austin Allegro drivers, eh? They pootle along, indicators flashing, at about the same speed as an ox, and everyone who's stuck behind them knows full well that there aren't any turnings coming up for at least three miles. Well, with the need to expend such a vast amount of concentration energy on simply driving in a straight line, it's unlikely that an Austin Allegro driver is going to go a bundle on this game. So, if you're a member of this rare breed, it's probably rather a good idea to go away. Go on, shoo!

In *Stunt Car Racer* you not only have to contend with a series of courses which go round and round (and round), but you also have to worry about your height above sea-level. That's right – these tracks are not flat, indeed no, by cracky – they undulate up and down like a sine curve from Hell. And guess what's missing from the sides of the not over-generously wide roads? Crash barriers, that's what! Muck up an approach to a corner and it's not just a case of "Oh dear, I've skidded onto the grass verge and bruised my little finger", it's more a case of "Oh dear, I'm going to die", which, if this was real life, you undoubtedly would. However, this is computer-game land so you don't actually die. But you do have to put up with a small wait as you're winched back onto the track by crane.



Oooh! What a long way down – either that or the track gets flippin' thin!

There are three ways of playing *Stunt Car*. There's the 'head to head' (where you need to attatch two computers together and take on a 'chum' in real time), the multiple-player (two or more players take it in turns against the computer-controlled cars, with race and lap times being saved, so you can tell at a glance who's the crappest driver) or the direct 'you versus the computer' mode (in which you vie for position against the computer-controlled cars in a league table made up of four divisions).



Blimey! If I reach Division two I'll

THE LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Each of the four divisions is made up of three places and you, at start of pla are right at the bottom of the barrel. Yup, 'fraid so. Division four, third plac Ideally you want to be in division one, first place, but ideals aren't always attainable. Especially if you happen to



Another race lost and not a friend in the world. Curses.

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be useless. To rise a division you have to take on both the other contenders in your particular class, and beat them on both the tracks of your division (each race comprises of three laps by the way). At the end of each set of races, the person in first place gets promoted a division while the person at the bottom gets demoted.

THE TRACKS

There are eight tracks in all with a pair of tracks alloted to each specific division. For instance, the two 'easiest' tracks (The Little Ramp and The



o I'll hav to take on Brian Blessed!

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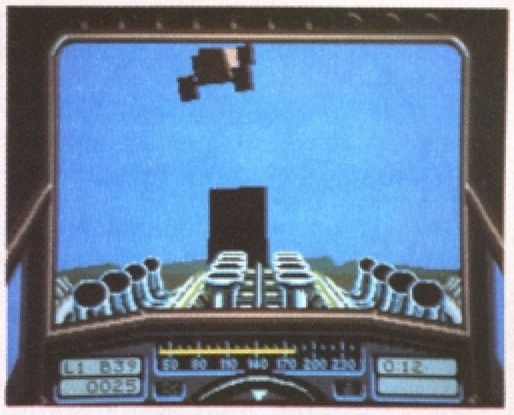
Humpback) are allocated to the most pathetic division i.e. division four. Beat the computer cars on these and promotion takes you to division three – where you can compete on the Big Ramp and The Stepping Stones and so on. If you want to 'have a go' on one of the tracks that's assigned to a division higher than yours, that isn't a problem – you can just click on the practice option and choose a course but in this practice mode there isn't an opponent. Just you, your car and the promise of three stomach-churning laps. Mind you, there is a digital stopwatch at the bottom of the screen, so you can compete against your own times (unless you're so crap that you never even manage to complete a lap. In which case you can't).

WHAT'S WHAT	
TITLE	Stunt Car Racer
PUBLISHER	MicroStyle
PRICE	£24.95
FORMAT	ST/Amiga
RELEASED	December

WHAT'S THE DAMAGE JOHN?

Even though your car is a custom built buggy with fantastic suspension, super-dooper bumpers and roll bars all over the shop, it's best to avoid hard knocks, though the courses are designed to supply you with just that. Each time you take a jump too quickly and come down with a little bit of a thump, a hairline crack snakes its way along the roll bar. When the crack reaches from one side of the roll bar to the other, your car then becomes an 'ex-car' and you come to a grinding halt in a shower of sparks.

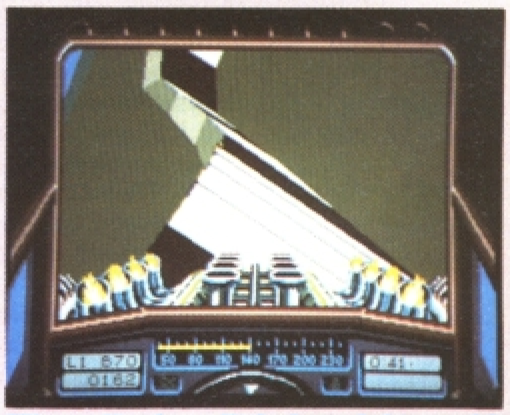
If you make a major guff up (such as coming off the track and smashing into the ground or not hitting a take-off ramp at a high enough speed) then an 'impact crater' will appear on the roll bar. These holes in the metal framework weaken the car, and the more you get, the quicker the crack snakes across – in a breaker's yard version of 'join the dots'. The real trouble with the impact craters is that (unlike the crack) they aren't reset to zero at the start of each race – they stay with you throughout the season. Having eight craters at the beginning of a race on The High Jump isn't a good idea... you'll be lucky if your buggy holds out for one lap, let alone three. (Unless you drive very slowly and avoid the bumps – but then you aren't going to win the race anyway).



"Come back here, Mr. Johnny-Hotpants-Racing-Driver!"



"YARGH! That was a flippin' bumpy landing! A bit of right on the steering wheel should solve it!"



"Um... Maybe a little less right would have been better..."



"I'll give you thirty sovs, guvnor"

Dunc: Well jipper me scarpies (*Eh? Ed.*), I really love these car games. They give me a chance to drive the way I normally do so I'm usually quite good at them, and this is a car game and a half. In fact it's five car games! *(Just stick with the 'car game and a half'. Ed.)*

Having gone through the options sequence, a crane hoisted my buggy up and over the track and then 'plop', dropped me onto it. All of a sudden, my opponent zoomed out ahead of me and started to diminish in size. Why was he getting smaller, I wondered? So I popped to the library and quickly read a book called *Perspective And Distance* by Professor Arnold Sweetcorn. Apparently the computer car was becoming smaller because it was getting further away from me which meant I was losing the race. Confound it! I rushed back to the monitor to see the words 'Race Lost' on-screen. So Professor Sweetcorn was right. Curse him. Time for race two. This time I was ready. As soon as my car landed on the track, I snapped the joystick firmly forward and heard the engine pitch rise. Yahoo I was moving but the computer car was still tearing ahead. On squeezing the fire button I discovered it was for turbo-boost. Phew, (crunching noises) just made it round the corner and oh no, what's that? It looks like a ramp of some sort. Boing. Up in the air. Still up in the air. STILL up in the air (maybe I was going too fast). Crunch, bounce, back in the air, snap... CRUUUNCH. Whoops.

HASSLE FACTOR: 1
The crash sequences and subsequent winching back onto the track can take what seems like a trillion years, by which time your opponent has very probably put in half a lap (or more).

You know the feeling you get when watching a televised roller coaster ride? Yeah? Well, that's the feeling you get when racing around these circuits – especially the one called, erm, The Roller Coaster. The difference is however, that your car isn't on rails, it's up to your joystick skills to keep it from making a large mess on the ground.

The suspension on the car 'works' too – when you land after a jump the springs compress and then recoil. Even on a straight piece of track, if you hit the brakes the nose of the car drops and the scenery responds as in real life by going up a smidgin. Actually, when I said 'the brakes', it was a bit misleading as there aren't any. Pulling back on the stick simply slows the engine down, rather than acting directly on the wheels. Pull it back for long enough and not only will you stop, but you'll actually start to go backwards. I tried to complete a couple of the courses in reverse, but it's a bit tricky without a rear-view mirror.



There's something you won't be able to see by just looking at the screenshots though, and that's the impression of speed involved. You'll have to take my word for this – but it's fantastic. The animation of the other car is pretty 'brill' too. It's best to zoom ahead and overtake as soon as possible and put some distance between the cars. There – a little tip!

What more can I say? *Stunt Car Racer* is brilliant. The sound could have been a tad better, there might have been a teensy-weensy bit of ground detail during the crash sequences, and it would have been nice if you could have saved the game in the middle of each set of races rather than only at the end but other than that I can't fault it.

THE VERDICT

G	GRAPHICS	93
S	SOUND	86
A	ADDICTIVENESS	91
E	EXECUTION	95

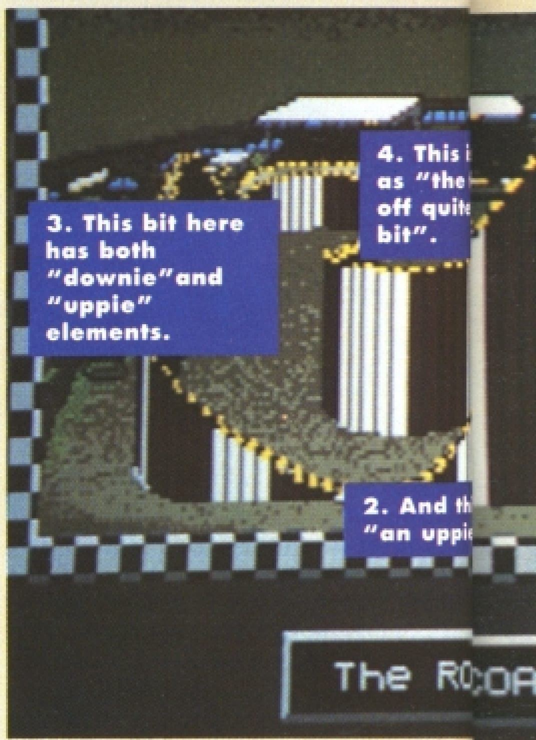
A stupendously fast, action-packed, solid 3-D racing game. If it were in the arcades it would 'clean up'. Vomit inducing stuff. Brilliant!

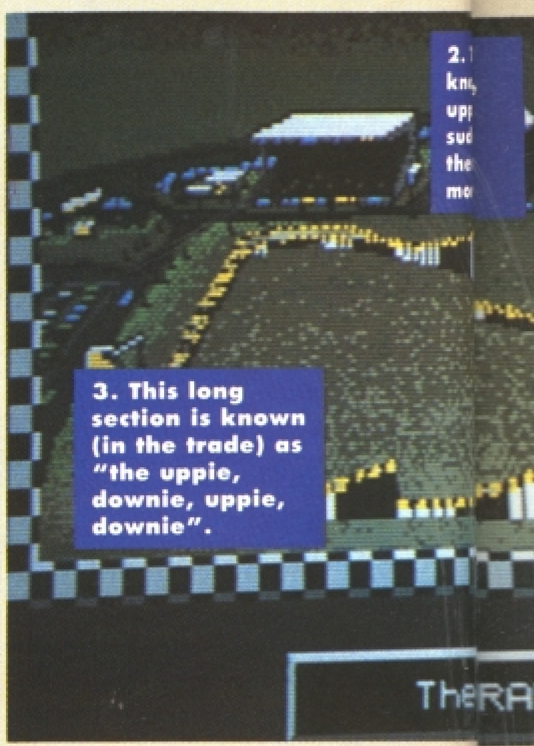
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SOME MILDLY INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT DRIVING...

MILDLY INTERESTING FACT ONE

***Stunt Car Racer* was actually conceptualised and coded by Geoff Crammond, the same geezer who designed and wrote *The Sentinel*. What a clever chap he is. Um, that's it – end of Mildly Interesting Fact One.**



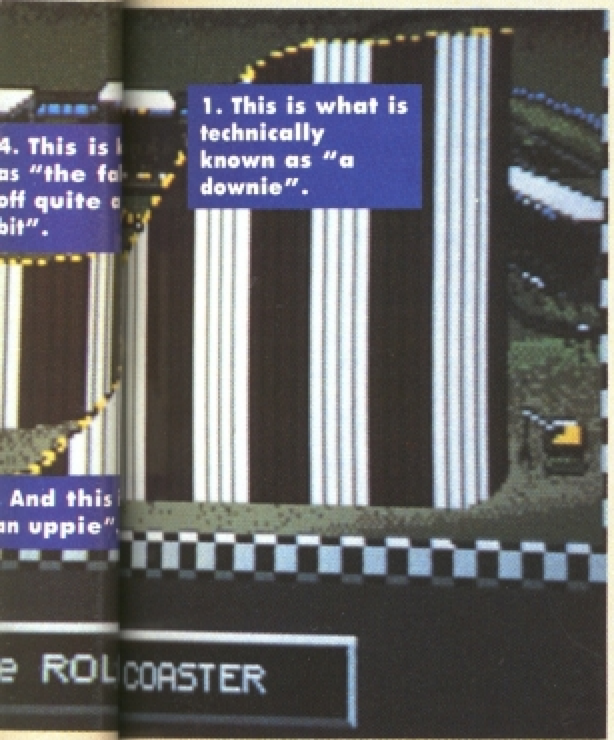


MILDLY INTERESTING FACT TWO

It is quite dangerous to drive a car at a very high speed (in reverse), the wrong way down a motorway with your eyes closed and all the doors open. Um, end of Mildly Interesting Fact Two.

MILDLY INTERESTING FACT THREE

Ford Anglias are not the world's most desired cars. Nor are Reliant Robins. Nor are Austin Allegros (especially the estate version). Erm, end of Mildly Interesting Fact Three. (*Hang on, I've got a Reliant Robin... Ed.*)



1. This is what is technically known as "a downie".



1. Oh look, a crane. I wonder what it's for?

Sean: First of all, let's get all the usual superlatives out of the way. *Stunt Car Racer* is flippin' brrrrrrilliant. There's no other word for it. Well, there's brrrilliant with slightly fewer 'r's in it. It's a very simple idea – racing another car round a bumpy track – and it's perfectly executed. There. This reviewing lark's easy. (*Another paragraph please. Ed.*) Oh... erm...

The first thing that strikes you about *Stunt Car Racer* is the way the perspectives work to create an excellent emulation of reality. (*Eh? Ed.*) What I mean is, that when you go crashing off the side of the track, you will literally lurch forward and brace yourself for the impact. That's how involved you will get. The speed and smoothness of the scrolling is largely to thank for this, along with the solid and realistic nature of the graphics.



A special mention must also go to the sonics. Forget about music – that's for shandy drinkers – what you get here are incredibly realistic ('cos they's sampled) gut-wrenching, bending metal sounds as you swerve around a corner with your frame shot to pieces. And sick making crunchy noises as you hit the ground having fallen silently through about a hundred feet of fresh air. But that's only two major noises, in addition there are loads of other screechy, clangy, bendy effects that are guaranteed to have you clenching your teeth and praying your 'buggy' won't fall to pieces halfway through an accurately executed jump.

And that's another thing. The tracks are all cleverly designed so that it's not just a matter of belting round like Duncan when he's given the honour of parking the Publisher's car, (although the sounds are the same) each track is a mix of Dunc's driving, and more considered and 'intelligent' driving. For example, it's better to take some bumps slowly and accelerate on the down side, rather than hit them at two thousand miles an hour and spend the next 10 seconds gliding through the air before landing nose first with your suspension knackered. I would have liked more special features however, along the lines of The Drawbridge. It has a section of track that rises and falls as you race, forcing you to reach it at just the right time, 'cos if you don't, you either go plunging over the edge, damaging your suspension, or smash into it with a resounding... er... crash, bang, wallop.

HASSLE FACTOR: 1
Waiting to get winched onto the track whilst knowing the other car is getting closer and closer, takes an eternity. Well, it seems to, anyway.

For many people one thing that will add to the game's lasting appeal is the option which allows you to connect two computers together (even an Amiga to an ST) and race head to head. In the future this will doubtless give me the chance to take on Duncan and whip his ass, but for the moment racing against Brian Blessed and Co is keeping me fully occupied.

As it stands, *Stunt Car Racer* is a fantastic mix of Microprose simulation – style graphics and fantastic arcade-style addictiveness. It's a well thought out very playable game which must rate as one of the best games of the year. *Stunt Car Racer* proves that MicroStyle can really cut the mustard. Actually it doesn't, it proves they can produce a pretty, damn brilliant racing sim thingy and who cares about mustard anyway?



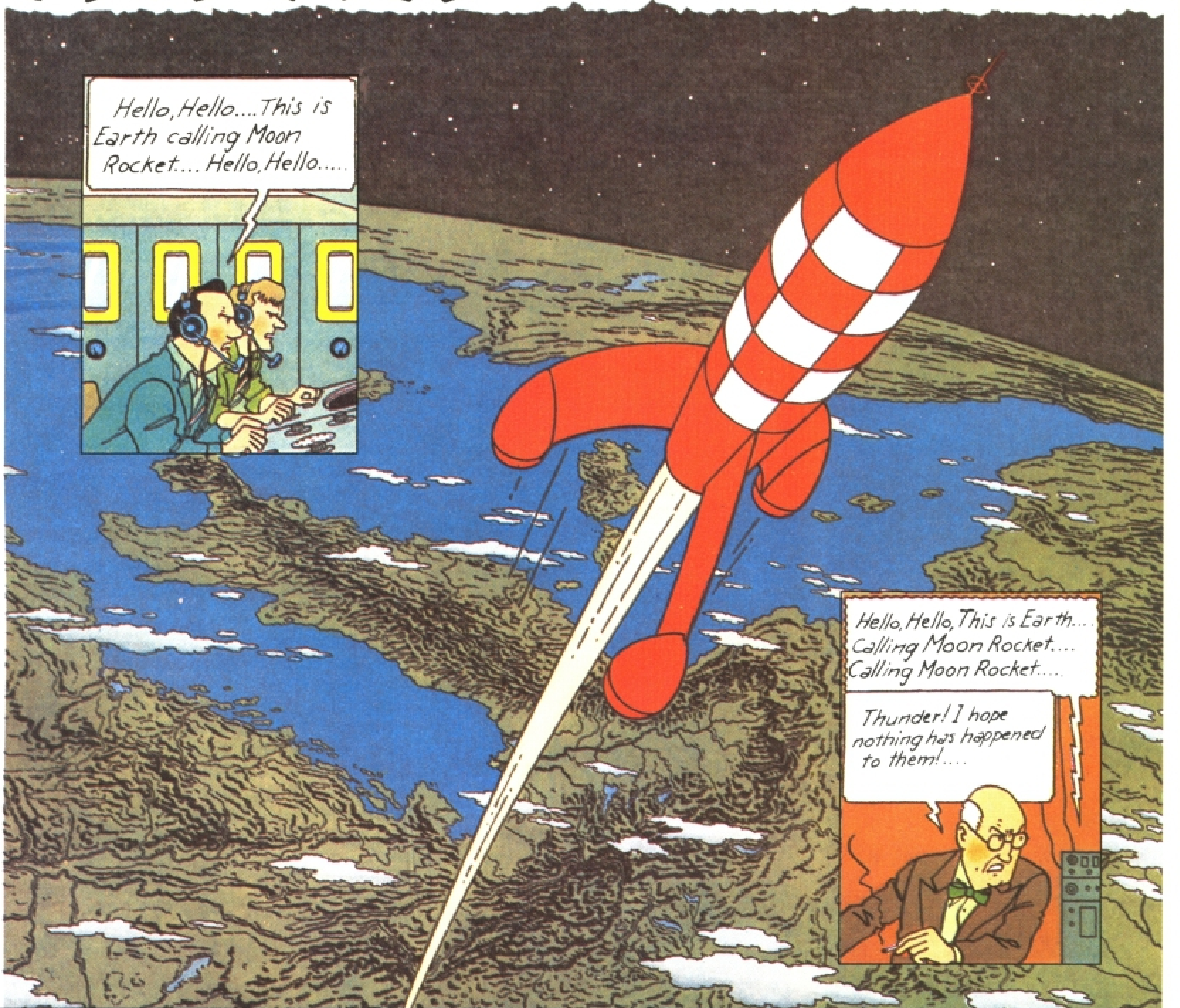
THE VERDICT

G	GRAPHICS	94
S	SOUND	82
A	ADDICTIVENESS	85
E	EXECUTION	88

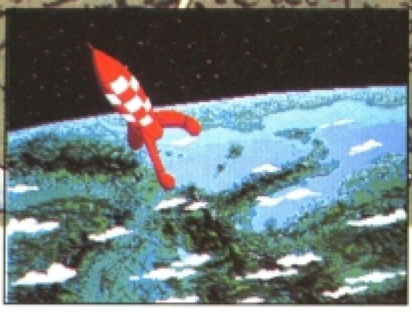
Brilliantly executed and programmed, a brilliant car racey simmy thingy. In short (*Let me guess— brilliant? Ed.*) Er... yes. Brilliant.

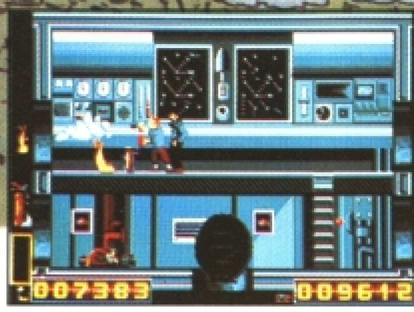
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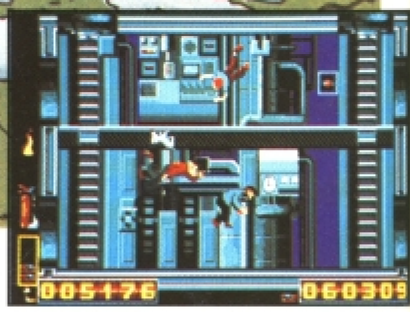
TINTIN ON THE MOON



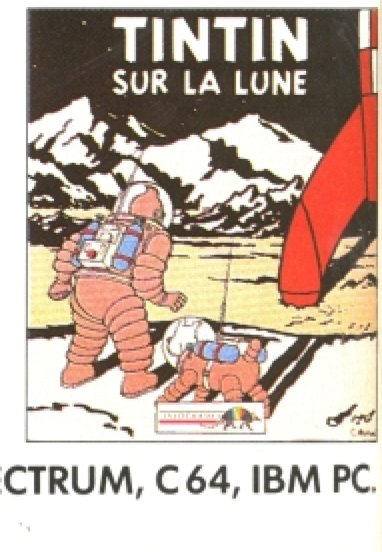












"Hello control station! Here is the moon rocket. Tintin speaking. I have just regained conciousness. Everything seems OK, we are now taking over the controls of the rocket." Aboard the rocket, you will relive with Tintin and his friends the most exciting adventure the world has ever known. The first trip to the Moon!

Will you succeed in piloting the red and white rocket through space and achieve a flawless landing? Will you capture Colonel Boris, the traitor, who wants to make the expedition fail? Will you be able to find the extinguishers to put out the fires, even while floating in zero-gravity (which ins't everybody's idea of fun)? Will you succeed in finding and disarming the bombs and freeing your companions in order to get out of the rocket to make the first step on the Moon? You will discover all this by playing "TINTIN ON THE MOON", the first computer game based on the comic books by Hergé...

Before Armstrong there was Tintin and... may be you!

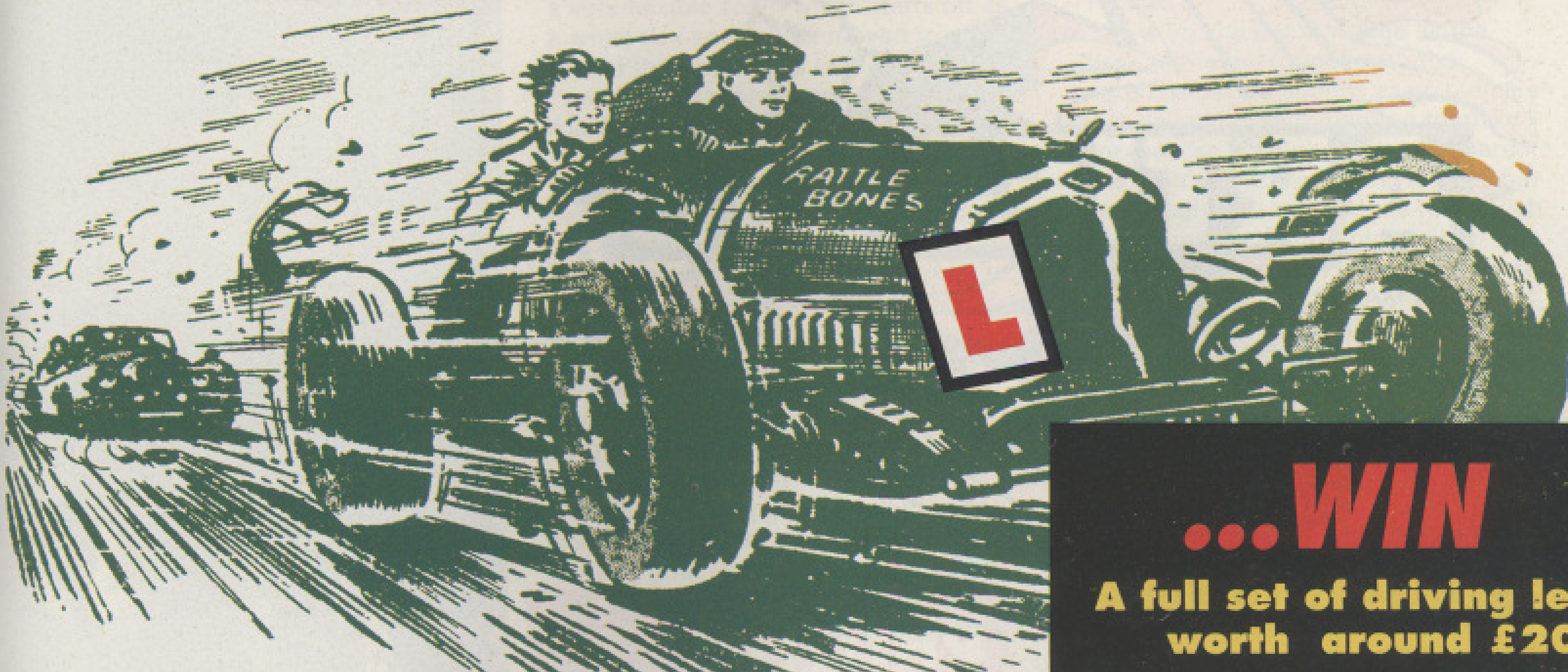
Available on : **AMIGA, AMSTRAD, ATARI ST, SPECTRUM, C64, IBM PC.**

INFOGRAMES

Mitre House - Abbey Road - Enfield Middsx - EN 2 RQ - Tel. (01) 36.40.123

mirror – signal – manoeuvre to...

COMPO



...WIN

A full set of driving lessons worth around £200

OR

A £200 Halfords gift voucher
(In case you've already passed your test!)

PLUS

Two rattling remote control Ferrari F4 cars

FOR PEDESTRIANS ONLY

Passed your test already have you? Well 'rack off' to the next paragraph then, this bit is for 'pedestrians' only.

Still reading? Good. We'll assume you want to learn to drive. Well, thanks to the merry folk at Domark you can – FOR FREE! They're so chuffed with their new arcade conversion *Hard Drivin'* that they're letting us offer you 15 complete (and unabridged) driving lessons with the British School Of Motoring. Each lesson lasts a whole hour, and you'll learn how to reverse round corners and carve up flashy 'G reg' motors – and all those sorts of handy tips! And don't feel left out if you don't win. There are two flashy, Ferrari F4 remote control cars for the two runners up. They're worth over £60 each and really annoy old wrinklies when you race them on pavements! Skip to the 'How To Win' bit to find out how to, erm, win...

FOR DRIVERS ONLY

Hello. You're obviously a snoot car-driver. You've passed your test, forgotten everything you were ever taught, and now drive in your own 'inimitable style' (i.e. probably very dangerously!). Ho hum. So what do you want with driving lessons then? Nothing, that's what. What you COULD do with are some car accessories – we bet! A flashy new radio/cassette player? Speakers? Some furry dice? Seat covers? A sun-strip that proudly proclaims "Shaz and Baz"? A couple of halogen headlight bulbs? Yes, all these things (and more) could be yours if you walk into a Halfords store armed with the £200 voucher we're giving away. How you win it is another matter though – skip to the How To Win bit to find out.

FOR PAUPERS ONLY

Oh dear, you're not a 'minority person' who's passed the driving test but hasn't got a car? You are? Blimey, what use is a Halfords voucher to you then? Well here's a hint...

Halfords sell bicycles. And a rather good mountain bike can be picked up for 200 quid (and pedal-power is ecologically 'sound' after all). What a brillo hint that was, eh? Now go to the How To Win bit...

HOW TO WIN...

Ahh, there you are. Right, here's how to win these fabulistic prizes..... by entering this blinking competition of course, you twerp! Ho ho ho. But what do you have to do though?

It's a piece of cake actually. Pictured opposite is a mock-up of a driving test examiner's board (the one he ticks everytime you do something 'wrong'). On the board are several manoeuvres that would ensure failure in a driving test. All you have to do is place them in order of severity by numbering them from one (extremely dangerous) to six (just stupid). So, if you think 'reversing onto a busy street without looking' is the most dangerous thing you can do, then put a number one in the box next to it. And so on, till you've done all six. Then fill in your name and address, cut the whole thing (or a photocopy) out and send it to Hard Drivin'? I'll Give You Hard Drivin' Competition, ZERO, 14 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1DE. And get into overdrive 'cos you've only got 28 days to get it here.

Certificate of Incompetence to Drive

The applicant failed to pass because of the following 'slip-ups':

---- Reversing onto a busy street without looking.
---- Travelling at high speed with both eyes closed.
---- Performing a three-point turn in the fast lane of the motorway.
---- Reversing down a dual-carriageway with all the doors open.
---- Climbing out of the sun-roof while travelling at 80mph.
---- Not making proper use of the rear view mirror.

I would like driving lessons/the vouchers*
*Delete as applicable

NAME ....
ADDRESS ....
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.... 'ZIP CODE' ....
....

RULES
•Any employees of Dennis Publishing or Domark caught entering this competition will be slit across the belly and have their bleeding flesh peeled up above (that's enough of that. Ed.).
•If you want to stand any chance of winning then make sure your entries are here by 31st December.
•The Editor's decision is final. So no whingeing.

ARTIFACTS

Photon Paint II and Fantavision. Are they really works of art or just a load of Jackson Pollocks? Alan Tomkins susses out whether they're worth spending hard earned Monet on.



PHOTON PAINT II

Art packages come and go all the time – each one attempting to outdo all that have gone before, but few last the test of time to become true masterpieces. One of the few that has is Microillusion's Photon Paint – a HAM (hold and modify, not something you put in a sandwich, clot!) package for the Amiga. When it was first released, it set new standards for HAM painting – not only was it a full-featured, user friendly package, but it also had many advanced features – most notably, the ability to wrap brushes into geometric shapes. So when I heard there'd been an update (imaginatively called Photon Paint II) I wasted no time in nabbing a copy to see for myself. So what's been added and how good is it?

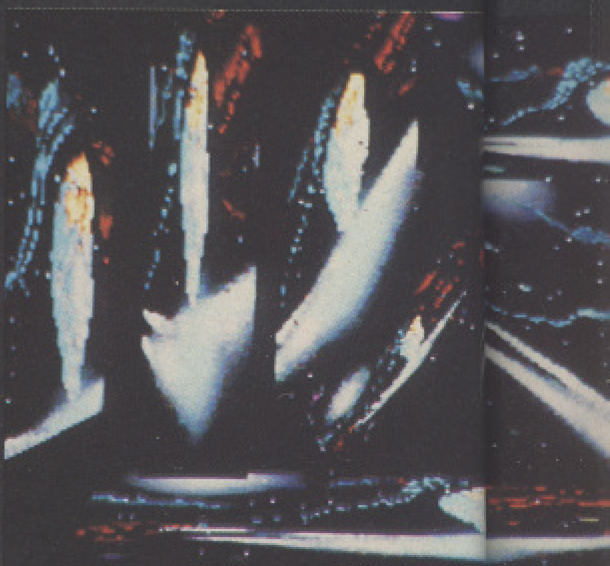
WHAT YOU GET

Well first off you get two disks – one for the program, the other for demo art and animation files. There's also a very well written and easy to follow 68 page manual which outlines the functions, tools and gadgets of each drop down menu and has some very useful tutorials. If it had illustrations, it would really set the standard for manuals, so Microillusions, if there is a Photon Paint III, bung 'em in and show people just what a manual should look like.

BRUSH STROKES

After booting the program the blank work screen comes up – except for the so-called fast menu which can be toggled on and off with F10 (it can also be moved up and down the screen at will). This contains the main drawing tools – pen, air brush, fill, zoom, text and the 64 colour palette.





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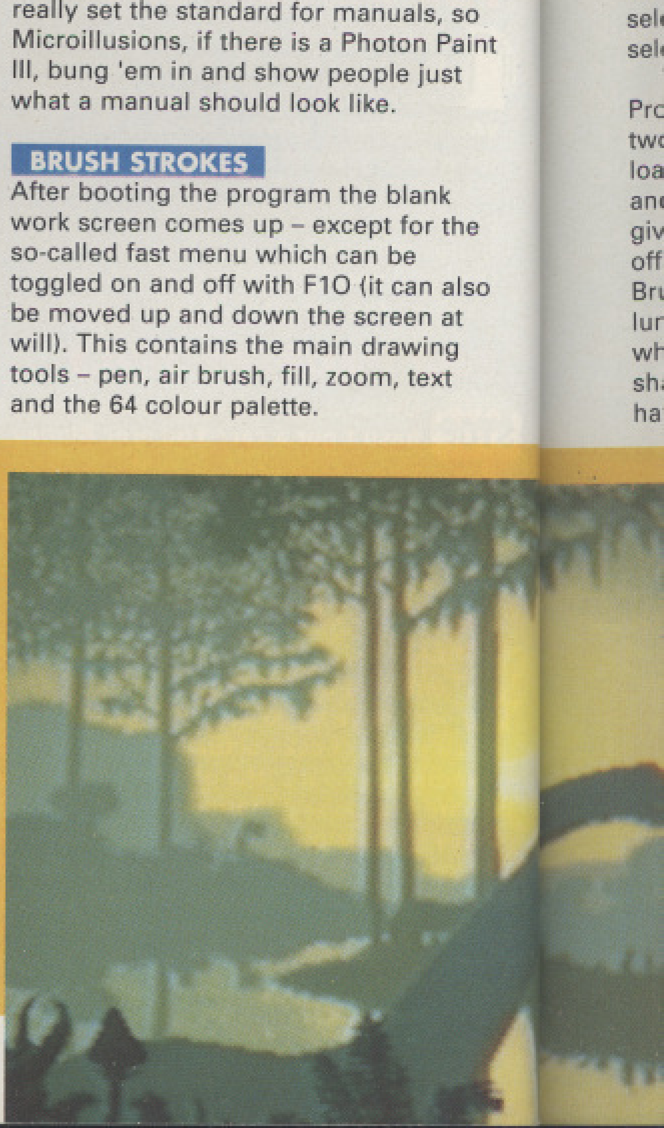
FANTAVISION

Fantavision is a package I've been waiting to get my hands on for a long time, so when I found out it cost under 40 quid, I was a bit suspicious. Surely it can't be so cheap? The highlight of Fantavision is that you can create frames for animating and also bring them to life with sound (the package comes with a library of 19 samples complete with balance, pitch, echo, duration and volume controls.) In fact, I can guarantee you'll spend hours playing with the sounds alone!

WHAT YOU GET

Open the packaging and you find one disk containing the program, demo movies and a library of sound effects along with a 64 page manual plus a four page quick start card. On booting up, the desktop displays two programs – one is Fantavision for creating movies-the other is Fantaplayer, which if you hadn't guessed already, is for playing finished movies.

If you double click on Fantavision you get the workscreen. The first thing you'll notice is that all the tools and a full palette of 32 colours are displayed around the screen in neat little boxes (these can be toggled off and on). There







Here's a screen from Photon II showing the fast menu, together with the zoom box activated on-screen that has been wrapped in to a ball.

Photon Paint II, comes with a number of demo screens – these have had the perspective treatment.

On hitting Return this menu is enlarged to include RGB and HSV controls, not to mention the full colour selection squares that enable you to select the exact shade you want.

There are six drop down menus – Project, Preferences, Brush, Special and two Modes menus. Project includes load, save, remapping, alternate page and font gadgets. Selecting Preferences gives you the option of screen mode, offset, co-ordinates and mouse gadget. Brush includes resize, rotate, wrap on, luminosity, bend, stretch, twist, and tilt while Special has stencil, grid and shadow and the two Modes menus have various blending gadgets.

ZOOM IN!

So much for what you get... let's see how well it works. For me the make or break of any art package is its zoom mode – get this wrong and you can forget it. Thankfully, Photon Paint II has a very flexible zoom which starts off as a small box and can be moved to any part of the screen and resized at will. You can also zoom in and out of the zoomed image.

To see how well the wrap functions work, I loaded up a picture. All you do here is go to the Brush menu, select the ball gadget and then place a small cross on the screen which can be dragged to the required size. The result is spectacular – a perfect representation of the original picture in a 3-D ball appears on-screen. By adding luminosity you can then bring the image to life. Don't overdo the brightness, as too much spoils the end result.

You can also control the light source and postion it above, below, either-side, behind, or in front of the image. These functions are so good, you'll spend hours just playing around with shapes and light sources – I did.

Stencils, which are used to define an area of the screen, cannot be altered by any subsequent painting action. Here you draw a freehand outline around the image you want to protect. This function is incredibly useful and easy to use and can be toggled on and off. Likewise the airbrush – its size is adjusted by simply clicking inside the air brush gadget and dragging it to the required size. The blend function is very effective – after you've loaded a picture you can then load in a brush file (a ghost is provided on the art disk). *(Spook! Ed.)* Select the blend gadget and you're ready to start blending. Make sure you experiment first though 'cos it takes a while to get the effects you want.

MOVIN' IMAGE

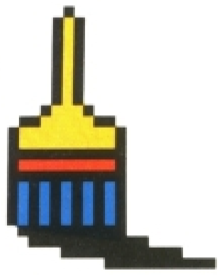
Now we come to the pay off because Photon Paint II has full screen animation enabling you create up to 10 full screens (Anim files) and then play them back. To use this you must draw and save 10 different screens of animation (in true *Blue Peter* style Photon Paint II has already done this for you by providing a 10 screen animation of a horse). Next design and save a background screen on which to place the animations. Now an extra page has to be created to place the background on – this is done by loading the animation and then hitting 'K' on the keyboard to take you ahead of the 10 animation frames. By selecting Insert Page, you will call up page one of 11 pages .

Now you've got to merge all the horse animation frames with the background. This sounds easy, but care must be taken when merging to make sure that the background is transparent. I had a bit of trouble getting it right, but soon caught on, and had the horse with background up and running fairly quickly. But a word of warning to those of you who are new to HAM painting – while painting, and particulary cutting and pasting, you'll experience a number of streaks across the screen – ignore these, the computer plots the image correctly when your frames are running.

THE VERDICT

I'm really impressed with Photon Paint II because even with the very advanced functions it's so easy to use. You can create anything from beginners' doodles to complicated works of art like the Mona Lisa. This upgrade is faster in all its operations (a welcome touch, because I for one am always moaning about the slowness of the Amiga operating system) which proves that the Amiga can be speeded up if the programmer knows what he's doing

For the benefit of those of you who who missed out first time round with Photon Paint I and are just about to buy an Amiga, I recommend you shell out for Photon Paint II. Don't be put off by HAM mode or the advanced functions because you'll soon get the hang of it. Photon Paint II is definitely state of the art and it's going to be a very hard act to follow.



WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	**Photon Paint II**
PUBLISHER	**Microillusions**
PRICE	**£89.95**
FORMAT	**Amiga**
RELEASED	**Out now!**



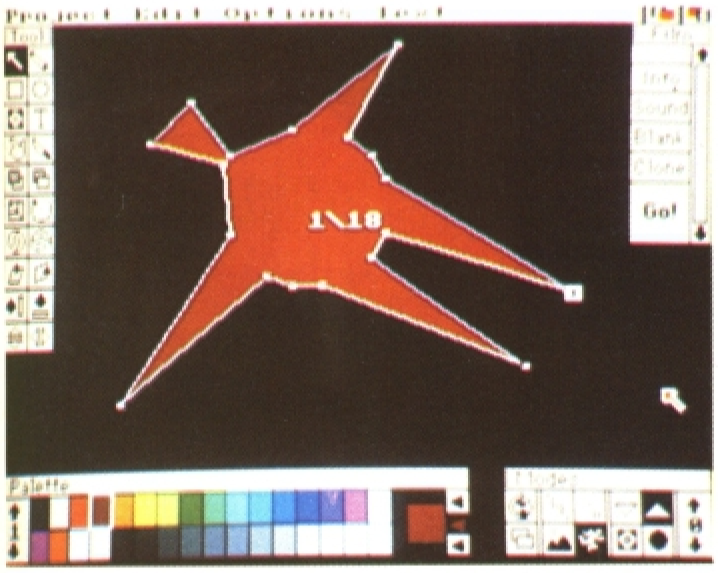
This shows one of the animation demos that comes with Fantavision. It shows a prehistoric swamp and a Bronto-saurus.

are also two other boxes – one is called Modes and the other is called Film and it's this one that allows you to actually make a movie. Across the top of the screen are four drop down menus – Project for loading, saving and clearing movies and backgrounds and sounds. Edit for cutting and pasting, and Options for modifying palette, screen format plus preferences.

Fantavision differs from most other art packages because it's object orientated (in other words you create a number of objects that can be manipulated by the program). As with Desk Top Publishing, you set the number of frames you want to use and the program then fills in all the missing frames. This whole process is known as 'tweening'.

MAKIN' MOVIES

So would Fantavision win an Oscar? And more importantly, is it easy to use? Well, select Tools on the on-screen menu and then click on the pen icon and move to the screen. Then by clicking on a number of different points make a box (this is done with K-lines). Make sure you keep the same pressure on the mouse button when you start or it defaults into a time signature for tweening. You'll find that after drawing the box, a number of things can be done to it. Firstly, you can change its colour by pointing to the one you want



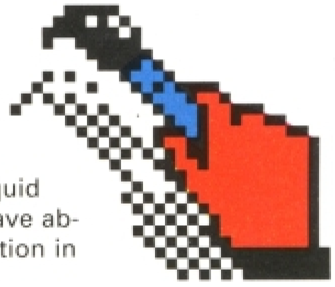
This shows the tool boxes and a circle that has been stretched to the rough shape of a man, by dragging a number of the edge boxes – in this case 18.

in the palette box or you can manipulate it in a number of different ways. By clicking the arrow icon in the tool menu (the main editing tool) then clicking on the box, it can be dragged around the screen, turned, twisted, squashed or flipped. This part of the program is very powerful and impressive.

Once you're happy with your image, you can then go to the on-screen Film menu box and by selecting Blank, move to your next frame. If you then click on the circle icon from the Tools menu you can make a circle and change its colour. Then choose the Film option and click on Go – the program takes over and animates the box into a circle right before your very eyes. Well impressive!

An excellent feature of Fantavision is that each object has a box at each point (the default for a circle is 18). These can be used to drag the object into a new shape while you can also drag a circle into a man for instance. Text is added by dragging a box DTP fashion and typing it in. This can then be positioned anywhere on screen simply by dragging. You can also import backgrounds from other art packages as well as objects to be animated if you like.

Fantavision not only lives up to expectations but it's a package you can have a lot of fun with whilst you create amazing animations. It's well laid out and is very user friendly, (as long as you're careful with the first mouse click). The sound section is also very easy to use and is mind-blowing when you're playing back a movie.



All in all it's a very powerful package that's worth a full price tag. At under 40 quid it's a steal. So I have absolutely no hesitation in recomending it.

WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	Fantavision
PUBLISHER	Domark
PRICE	£39.95
FORMAT	Amiga
RELEASED	Out now!

BETTER BY DESIGN

Ever felt let down after finishing a picture and found that the text font used in the package just doesn't do it justice? Well, your days of frustration are over – follow this step-by-step guide and your text styles will be limitless.

But, if you produced your picture in16 colours you won't be able to produce psychedelic multi-coloured texts. If you have an ST, port it into a Quantom Paintor Spectrum 512 (Amiga owners have no problem – just up the mode).

1) First thing to do when thinking of adding text is to find a good looking style. The best way to do this is to pop down to your local art shop and buy a copy of the Letraset



Graphic Design Handbook for just under a fiver. It's got a 100 or so text styles to play with (remember *Backlash*? A Letraset font called Calypso was used on the title screen).

2) Having chosen your text, draw it in free-hand and fill it in with the transparent colour of your palette.

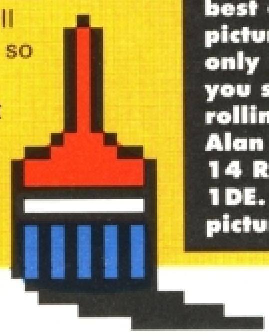
3) Now put a box around each letter, using another colour, and flood-fill the surrounding spaces inside the boxes. You have now finished the first stage in creating a multi-use textfont, so save them to disk for use in other pictures. The reason the letters are filled in with transparent is to allow you to use them over and over again with different fill patterns – so here's how you make a few...

4) If you have only 16 colours, select white and two or three shades of another two colours. Then draw a line in white near the bottom of the screen.

5) Using the lighter of the other two colours, place one or two lines above the white and repeat with the darker shades of the same colour, placing them above. Repeat this process with the darker colour below the white line. If you have more colours to play with then you can add them for greater effect. You can also create patterns with diagonal lines or even use the spray can to produce a mottled pattern.

6) Once you're happy with your fill pattern, cut and paste the letters into the words you want to use, then fill the area around the edges of the letters with the box colour. You're now ready to produce a shadow effect.

7) Select the box tool of your art package and make a black box. Then cut and paste the text font over the black box. Now flood fill the black area outside the text. And then repeat with the transparent colour – you'll now have your text in black – so cut and paste to the depth of the shadow you want and cut and paste your textured text over. You're now ready to place the whole thing into position on your picture!

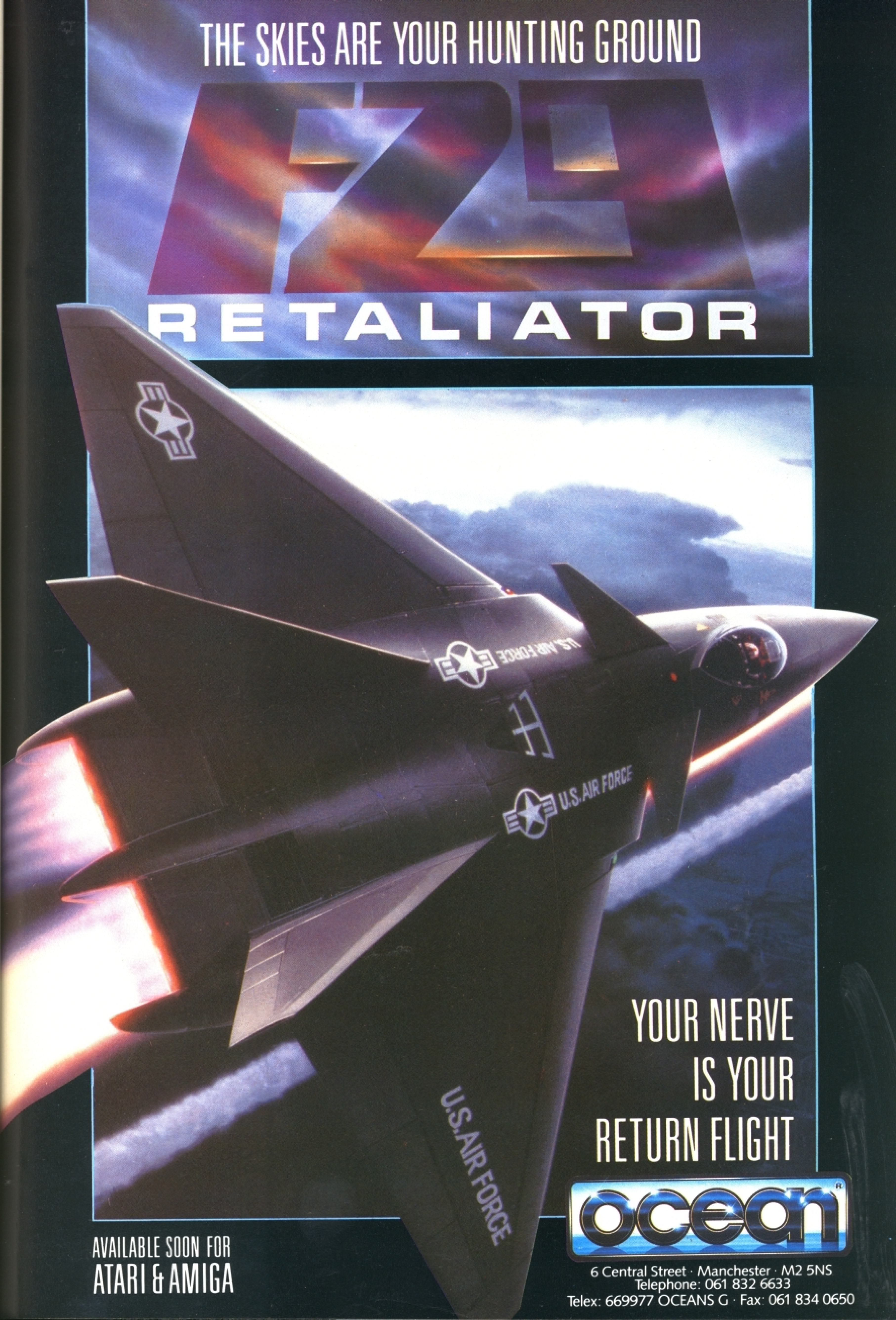


ZERO GRAPHICS OF THE MONTH AWARD

Every month I'll be picking a game that I think has the best graphics. To kick off I've chosen *Shadow Of The Beast* from Psygnosis. The country-side level is stunning featuring 13 levels of parallax and *real* depth. The other levels, while not as strong, still feature wild graphics – the only thing that lets the side down are the sprites which like other Psygnosis games, just aren't fluid enough, but no one can deny the quality of the backgrounds.



AND NOW THE GALLERY... We'll be publishing the best of your pictures and the best of your tips for creating pictures every month. But the only way we can do that is if you send them in. So get 'em rolling in (I need the stamps), to Alan Tomkins, ZERO, Artifacts, 14 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1DE. And remember every picture printed wins a prize.


THE SKIES ARE YOUR HUNTING GROUND
F29
RETALIATOR
U.S. AIR FORCE
U.S. AIR FORCE
U.S. AIR FORCE
YOUR NERVE IS YOUR RETURN FLIGHT
AVAILABLE SOON FOR ATARI & AMIGA
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Telephone: 061 832 6633
Telex: 669977 OCEANS G · Fax: 061 834 0650

GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS



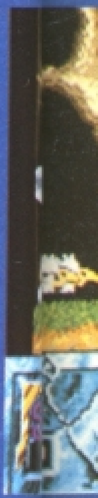
Ghouls 'N' Ghosts is possibly the only arcade game with between-the-legs joke potential. *David McCandless* grabbed his latex vampire cape, day-glo fangs, a jar of fool-your-friends fake blood and went, like a bat out of hell, to the depths of Abbadon (well Manchester actually) to see the horrifyingly good work being done on the 16-bit conversion.



This is where you start in the game, right slam blam in the middle of a graveyard haunted by famished zombies and ghouls.



Vapourised creatures often leave chests behind. These can conceal useful items (extra life, armour, weapons etc) or not so useful items (sorcerers, more creatures, betamax videos etc).





The terrain changes angle here, as ladders and platforms delve into the bowels of the hill. Animated roots and big fat pigs patrols stalk around here. Some serious dexterity and cunningness is needed.



Here's the same area in the arcade version. It's on a much larger scale on the coin-op with three levels of parallax scrolling, a resolution of 308 x 248 in 256 colours, and about three 68000 processors and a Z80A co-processors. Well, whaddya expect for £1200?





Manchester is a strange place. It rains almost continuously and all the buildings seem to be either brown, black or grey. People wander about saying "Aye chuck" and "Appen it was" quite a lot. Software Creations' offices are parked quite conveniently (and some might say, ironically) above a computer shop which, in turn, is almost directly opposite a pompously white-washed building signposted as The National Computer Centre. Yep, this is computer country all right.

Creations shares a hallway with a libel solicitors and an Italian hairdressers, but the modesty of its offices is no reflection on the quality of its output. Titles like *The Sentinel, Bubble Bobble,* and *Bionic Commandos* have surfaced from these backrooms and its reputation has enabled Richard Kay, its young Managing Director, to nab what has to be one of the juiciest coin-op licenses for some time, Capcom's *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts.* The 16-bit incarnations have been constructed by *David Broadhurst*, artworked by *Andrew Threlfall* and maestroed by *Tim Follin.*





Vive la France! Here I am, caught between some guillotines and a large tree infested with vultures. Beware of descending head-choppers!



Here's the end of the first level mother, a whopping great robot who thrusts his head out at you, in the process giving you a continuous dose of its igneous halistosis.

IN THE BEGINNING...

Software Creations is one of those companies whose name rings a bell, but you can't actually match the name with a game. "That's because the company has something of a split personality," explains Richard Kay. "There's Software Creations and then there's Software Creations Ltd."

Huh? "The former is the home-micro software development department. It deals with all the arcade conversions and other stuff in Europe." Whereas the limited company is a banner for all the ROM (Read Only Memory) development the company now does. ROM developments seems a bit of an obscure term. What exactly does it mean?

Richard waves a few important looking papers in my direction, but I only catch the words 'CONFIDENTIAL' and 'NINTENDO' stamped across them (in blood for all I know). These clandestine papers are so hot Richard has to wear asbestos gloves to handle them.

"We're offical developers on the console." He grins proudly. Not only because he managed to remove the asbestos gloves without ripping his cuticles off, but because there are only three other official Nintendo developers in the UK. The others are Elite, Ocean and Rare (formerly the legendary Ultimate – Play The Game). His grin is also widened by the fact that 1 in 4 families in America own a Nintendo – that's 80 million units, 80 million potential sales, 80 million possible Software Creations logos adorning 80 million possible US television sets...

I hear the distinct ringing of cash registers in the background. Richard disagrees. He describes the long weary route from the game to the dosh. "If we have a game finished now, it won't even be looked at until the end of the month. And then it won't be allocated until the second quarter of 1990. So you won't get paid until several months after that." Without doubt, a bit of a bummer.

Richard, previously a mere programmer and hexadecimal dogsbody, formed the company in (nostalgic tone) the Spring of '86. The sister ROM firm started in February last year. They've been working on *Ghouls* since January.

THE GAME

You play Arthur, King of the Britons, chivalrous knight and all round nice guy, as he careers across five landscapes in an effort to rescue some bint who's been kidnapped and imprisoned in the most hellish of cells, Hell itself in fact. The path of the game takes you across deceptively calm countryside, through deceptively deserted countryside, up to Mount Olympus and down into the echelons of Hell (not your average Bank Holiday day out by any standards).

On the first level Arthur lopes through a graveyard and then out into the great green outback. Grim reapers are coughed up out of the ground, while vultures and skull-spitting vegetation perch in awkward places. Arthur fights these with a combination of dexterity and projectile weapons. He starts by bunging swords about, then progresses to daggers and axes by shooting chests and collecting the booty within. On the inanimate side, there are guillotines and disappearing bridges to cope with. At the end of the level, an amour-plated cross between Patrick Moore and a green chicken awaits, guarding the portal to the next level...

Next a rotten festering ghost town conceals bouncing skulls and mutant flies, as well as hyperactive red gargoyles and blue serpent jobbies. And just in case that little menagerie wasn't enough,



THE PROGRAMMER

Apart from his impeccable taste in christian names, *David Broadhurst* is also a talented programmer. He's converted *Bubble Bobble, LED Storm,* and *Bionic Commandos.* David's computer history reads like a cliché.

He began by tinkering on the customary Sinclair home computer (ZX-81 in this case); he later upgraded to a more acceptable micro (Commodore 64); produced his quota of completely embarrassing games (*Mr.Frostie And The Killer Penguins* and *C5 Clive*). He was then messed about by the usual company-destined-to-fold (Icon Designs) before finally finding a job with a reliable firm (Software Creations) where he works happily to this day.

The idea of doing an arcade conversion has always appealed to me because a few weeks 'testing' the arcade original doesn't seem that much like hard work. How long did David spend 'testing' the coin-op?

"It took us three weeks and luckily we found a test mode on the arcade and used it to see the graphics, backgrounds and animation."

The conversion was a mammoth task. Was he daunted?

"Had it been my first project I think I would've made for the nearest 10th floor window. But since it's my fourth project I've got the experience and the confidence to cope... I think.



***Bionic Commandos* ahoy!**

The first thing I faced was the scrolling[he snarls]. That took a while. Then I had the graphics for the main Arthur sprite moving left and right at the start, but I ran out of memory, so he had to be flipped.

Next problem was to get him walking up and down the slopes. On a normal platform game everything's straight and rigid, whereas the terrain in *G 'N' G* is uneven. The ground had to be indexed to a table which contained its height, just so he could walk up and down."

Sounds complicated. The arcade contained far more sprites, how did they all translate onto the 16-bit?

"The sprite routines are simple but the sprite logic is difficult, mainly because there's so much of it. Every level is essentially a separate game."

Just to fuel the eternal 'better than yours' debate, I ask whether David prefers, the ST or Amiga.

I prefer the Amiga, but it's not as good as everyone says. It takes a hell of a lot of memory to get a decent scroll going. I do like the blitter, it's not any faster than the ST's sprite routines, but you don't have to have shifted definitions."

Will there be any difference between the ST and Amiga versions?

"Definitely. For a start the 32 colours on the Amiga will mean more detailed backgrounds and the scrolling and music will be better."

---

u've also got icky series of oby trapped formsand red hot lava to navigate as Cerebrus (*the canine that guards the entrance to Hades. Mythical Ed.*) awaits, standing guard at the end of this level.



Andrew uses a map editor, written by David, to design the levels. There are 120 pre-designed blocks per level, which are stored in four preset definitions to provide a decent scroll.

More beast and behemoths populate level three. The whole style of the game changes here into a vertically scrolling shoot 'em up. A platform carries you inexorably upwards while packs of knights and statues 'have a go'. Then you have to high-tail it across some demons' tongues (euchh!) to confront the bulbous eye at the end.

Level four is the gooey descent to Hell, taking place across a slimey vista packed with oversized vegetables and man-eating flora. Caterpillars and more grim reapers are your enemies here; some serious reflexes are needed if you want to survive the dreaded slippery tubules and sinking sunflowers. The final mother is a great big massive green boil, protected by some creepy beetles and spitting pores.

Level five is hell (literally), culminating in a confrontation with Beelzebub himself. By this time you should have acculumlated a few 'super-weapons' to aid you in your fight. These are quite inventive: one ignites the platforms in front of you, nicely oxidising all the creatures within range; another conjures a mirror image of yourself, who follows in your wake, doubling your fire power; another mega weapon attracts massive lightning bolts to your armour, electrocuting everything else.

BLOODY SCROLLING

What does programmer *David Broadhurst* have nightmares about? What would he happily wire up to the National Grid and electrocute? Just what makes him tear out his hair and jump up and down in pure white frustration?

"That bloody ST scrolling!"

David has several other adjectives he uses to describe the ST's scrolling ability, but printing them here would require profuse use of asterisks. We settled for describing it as "the pits".

Ghouls 'N' Ghosts is an all-action, all-scrolling game, and that scrolling was probably the most daunting task in converting it to the ST. Unlike the Amiga, the Atari has no inbuilt hardware for shifting the screen at speed, so programmers have to write dedicated routines to scroll the ST display. These are often horribly inadequate. How did David solve this "bloody" problem?

"With great difficulty," he hisses through his teeth. "I have to have all the background blocks (the scenery etc) shifted in memory four times per block to achieve a reasonable scroll. There are 120 blocks per level which take 32K, and then they're shifted four times so that's 128K. It's the only way you can possibly get a decent scroll."

AFTERWORDS

Ghouls is going to be tried out under the company's new internal games-testing policy. Richard confesses that their 16-bit work has been a little weak in the past, and now a group of people sit and play the game through for bugs and complaints. As an incentive Richard offers a pound for every bug found. So, it's two hours of extensive games playing and then off to the pub for a few jars of well earned bug-money. Richard spent 37 quid on level one alone, but compared to a riotously happy public and warmly smiling US Gold, it's a "minor cost".

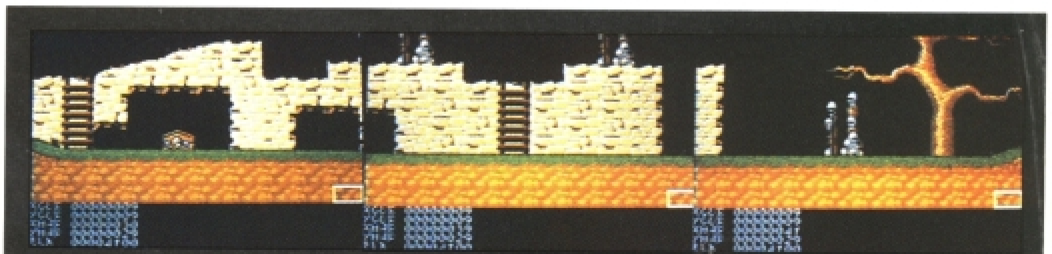
This game is likely to suffer from '*Last Ninja* syndrome', a celebrated disorder, whereby the sequel preceeds the original game. This game's original, *Ghost 'N' Goblins,* is being programmed by Elite Systems and won't be seen until early 1990.

The sequel is out at Christmas. It's taken a year of hard slog and blurred vision, and is as visually close to the arcade original as anyone could hope; the gameplay is accurate to the arcade, right down to the way Arthur sticks his bottom out when he climbs a ladder.

Ghouls 'N' Ghosts is one Hell of a good game! (*and that's one Hell of a bad pun. Unamused Ed.*)

WHAT'S WHAT

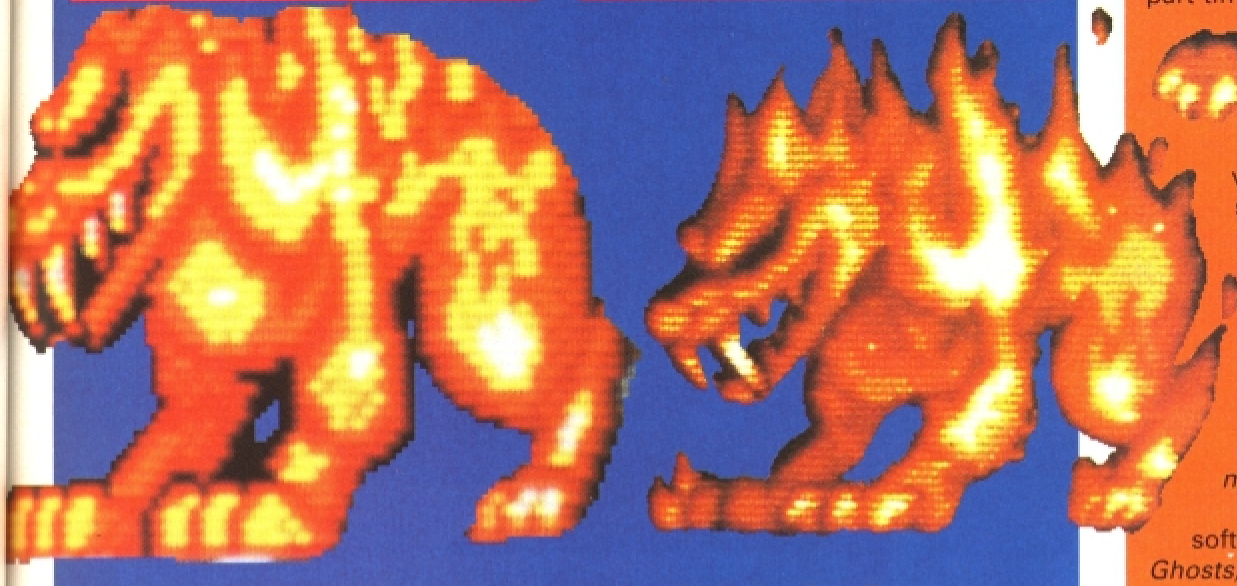
TITLE	Ghouls 'N' Ghosts
PUBLISHER	US Gold
PRICE	£19.99/£24.99
FORMAT	ST/Amiga
RELEASED	December



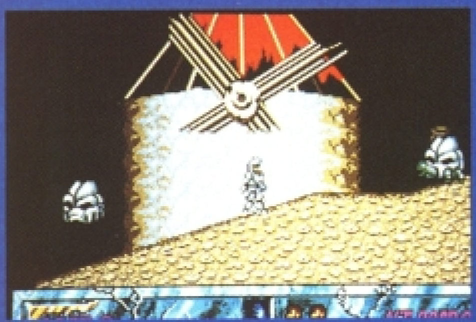
The basic layout is designed without sprites or moving objects.

SIDE BY SIDE

16-BIT	ARCADE



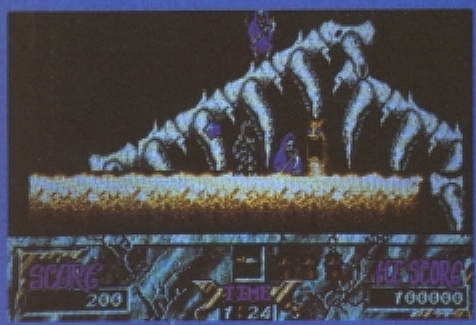
Here's Cerebrus at the end of level 2. A mean little pup by all accounts.




Some parts of the background have remained, namely this rotten windmill from level two.




Now we're deep into the game, in 'veggie' country to be exact. These poles are dripping with gooey blue slime which acts as a kind of conveyor belt so you can't actually stop as the bugs attack you.




Now we getting really deep (perhaps we should all sit down in a circle and meditate, yah?) into the game, right into the 'bones' of the play. Hah-hah. Bones - geddit? (*No. Ed.*)




This section involves you dancing across these gargoyles' fleshy muscular organs (that's 'tongues' to you). If you stay on them too long they drag you into those gaping maws, and it's gulp! Goodbye cruel world.

THE GRAPHICS MAN

Andrew Threlfall's computer past is almost as typecast as David's. His part-time job in computers furnished his home with a Commodore 64, that was promptly used as a work station for Andrew's earlier graphics. After providing the graphics for several games (unnamed here to avoid embarrassment) he decided to approach Richard for a 'job'. His calibre was recognised and he was instantly set to work on the visuals for games like *Bubble Bobble, Bionic Commandos* and *Flying Shark.*

With an awesome chunk of software such as *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts,* the sheer quantity of graphics, is enough to turn a normal graphics man into a blubbering wreck of quivering flesh (probably). "There was a hell of lot there," Andrew remembers, "and we thought My God! Where are we going to start? Capcom really went to town on the graphics."

"The test mode certainly helped enormously. With it you can isolate the building blocks and the sprites and also their complex animations."

But the graphics remain on the arcade screen and you've got to get them onto the computer screen. How's it done?

"Well, we spend a few weeks 'testing' the game, getting to know where all the characters are. Then we set up a camera, take pictures of certain points and screens from the test-mode. Afterwards I just work from the snapshots."

Andrew normally makes like Picasso on the target machine but is completely in love with the Amiga. ("Just can't wait to get my hands on it"). He uses *Degas* for the backgrounds and still graphics, and *Art Studio* for the animations.

The coin-op has a resolution of about 308 pixels across by 257 down with about eight squillion colours, and three levels of parallax scrolling. How did you manage to squeeze that much data in this much of a computer?

"Well all the graphics are smaller but they're in the right proportion. Several things had to go, primarily the scenic backgrounds. We could have had parallax scrolling but only in eight colours per background. So we decided it would be better to concentrate on the foreground."

It must be really satisying after nine months of work "24 hours a day" to see your finished product being played and enjoyed by people, to see all your work splashed across full colour spreads in national magazines. "Yes it is." And if someone were to accidently erase all your disks you'd do it all again quite happily, wouldn't you? "Eh?" Only kidding.

FIRST CONTACT

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LASER SQUAD



David McCandless knows a thing or two about the current music scene and all things street-cred so who better to play Blade's new sci-fi strategy _Laser Squad_ which, er... has really got nothing to do with trendiness or sounds.

For most people the title "strategy-game" conjures up the image of a dull, terrifyingly boring game and middle-aged gents with long, curly moustaches mobilising around a table coated with lots of little hexagons. Well, if you're like most people then be prepared to change your views, because *Laser Squad* is an example of how strategy games can be fun, fun, fun (even when your father has gone and repossessed the T-bird).

Laser Squad is interesting and different for three reasons:
a) because it has five intricate sci-fi scenarios to choose from;
b) because it actually has a suspense element; and
c) ... er, because I say so.

The first thing to do in this game is delegate weaponry and armour to your squad members. You have a certain amount of 'credits' to do this with. The difficulty level determines the numbers of creds you start with, ranging from fabulously rich to National Health. (Oooh! Bit of politics there! Nice one). Top of the range in the artillery department is the heavy cannon (a huge industrial laser gun) to the Marsec pistol (a weedy domestic handgun). You can also get your fair share of grenades, mines, ammo, machine guns, rocket launchers and light sabres. Once your squad is all 'gunned up' then it's well and truly mission time.

THE MISSIONS

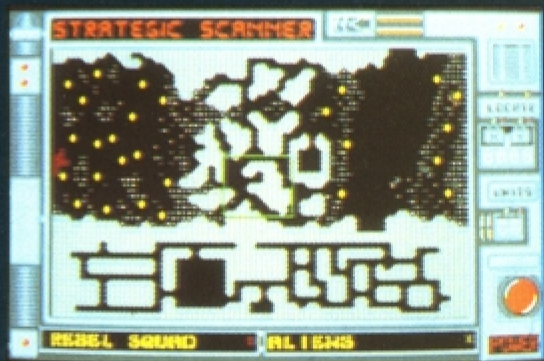
THE ASSASSINS – Target: mega-corporate, high-rank, big director type person, Sterner Regnix. This man has embezzelement and espionage for breakfast, and then moves on to government manipulation and drug-dealing for lunch. Tea-time could spell the end of the galaxy. *Laser Squad* is deployed to pop Regnix's corporate cork. But he is extremely well protected by his planet fortress and an elite squadron of combat droids.

MOONBASE ASSAULT – Target: the omni-corporation's moonbase on a far-away planet, concealed right in the bowels of the galaxy. The moonbase cheekily houses the movements and secrets of rebel groups like Laser Squad. . Laser Squad values its privacy (and has some rather unsavoury connections with the planet Soixante-Neuf) and so deploys itself to put the nosey corporation's conk out of joint.

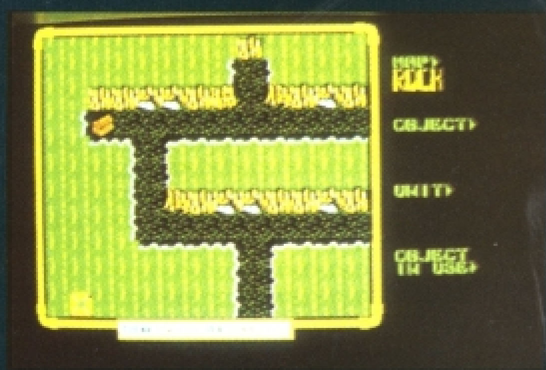
RESCUE FROM THE MINES – A jumped-up group of 'amats' (Laser Squad jargon for 'amateurs') have fluffed up an important mine-installation blow-up job. Luckily (or unluckily depending on how annoyed you are at the amats), three members of the squad have been imprisoned. They have vital information about the rest of the mine complex. Laser Squad miss their tea-break to boldly go and free the prisoners.

THE CYBER HORDERS – A rebel planet installation is being attacked by a squad of frumpy combat droids, intent on disrupting the seismic equilibrium (that's volcanic activity to you) of the planet. Laser Squad must 'dig in' and give 'Jerry' a damn good British whipping.

PARADISE VALLEY – This scenario's title is deceptively wrong... it's not set in a valley at all. It's more of an alien infested quagmire, fraught with pit falls, rivers and tunnels and about as Garden of Eden-like as Cyril Smith's back passage. Laser Squad must 'penetrate' this paradise to succeed.



This may look like something more at home under a microscope, but it's actually from your strategic scanner.



"Prepare for war men - it's the battle of the green baize."



DEPLOYMENT

You get a God's eye view of the level which slices away all the roofs of buildings, detailing all the flora and fauna, tunnels, corridors, objects, toilets, doors and computers. In fact it shows everything except your enemies' positions. Those you never get to see (the screen blanks while the computer moves them) remain invisible until one of your teams has eye contact.

Laser Squad is quite a civilised game. You and your opponents actually take turns. Each member is allocated a number of movement points – the intial number is governed by how much the character is carrying, how agile he is, and whether he's a pencil-necked shandy man or not.

Rotating on the spot costs one point per direction, moving across normal terrain (corridors, space etc) costs four points, while more 'arable' terrain (trees, grass, dead bodies etc) costs even more. If you come across an enemy (or 20) then you have the choice of firing. This changes the on-screen map. Gone are the vegetation and fascinating wall murals, here are the most tangible (i.e. shootable) objects, represented by blobs and bigger blobs (for trees). You have to direct a crosshair over your intended target and then choose a shot type.

AUTO gives you a raking machine gun effect but is very inaccurate while AIM is more precise but costly on the old movement points; SNAP is a sort of compromise between the two. The last option, THROW, is an option to throw your weapon at an aggressor. This, unfortunately, is all very stupid.

And so the game continues... lots of sneaking around corridors, educated guesses as to the whereabouts of enemy locations, lip-biting during fire-fights in narrow corridors, lots of sweaty trigger fingers and swearing when your men get caught in ambushes. *Laser Squad* avoids tumbling into the pitfall which 90% of all strategy games have fallen into – that is, having too much "strategy" and not enough "game."

AMIGA

Laser Squad is intially quite hard to get into. There are a few menus to wade through, a few title screens to go "Cor!" at, and a few key decisions to be made before you're 'dug in' on the battlefield. Even then the first two or three 'moves' are quite turgid really, with menial tasks like arming to carry out. But as soon as your first enemy pops out of the metal work, your blood boils and your kettle runs cold (if you know what I mean).

The graphics are fairly diagrammatic but detailed – they wouldn't stand on their own but they do look quite good all together. However, *Laser Squad's* lasting appeal is not in question. With game lengths ranging from half an hour (for a good massacre) to two hours (a good balanced conflict), seven skill levels, five scenarios and the option to plot your strategies against an unwitting chum, *Laser Squad* should keep you computer-motivated for at least two months.

The soundtrack is excellent – sort of Pet Shop Boys meet some sampled farmyard grunts. Although, it's a jangly, jolly sort of tune, things start to become pretty annoying when you miss the music-off option, and you're committed to having it blaring out continuously throughout the game.

My vast (hem!) experience with the 8-bit version of *Laser Squad* set me in good salivating stead for this review. If the game was brilliant on the Spectrum, the 16-bit incarnation had to be out of this world. And it was... and, er, it wasn't. (*Pardon? Ed.*). The 16 bitter has everything its predecessor had – the graphics, the gameplay, the suspense, the skill, the challenge, the characters even – but that's the point. I kept getting the impression that I was playing a Spectrum game on an Amiga monitor. Nothing's been changed. Okay, so there's a dab of colour here and there, and the odd sampled clash of thunder in the background but I couldn't help thinking, "Where's the Amiga?".

However, *Laser Squad* still remains a brilliant game, even though the Amiga could probably sit back, have a cigarette and clean out the fluffy bits between its toes while running the game. I think half the attraction of the game is the suspense element (What's awaiting round the next corner? Will the enemy find me? Where's Keith Chegwin?) and the intellectual ego-massage you can give yourself when you do finally defeat the computer (who plays a mean game). *Laser Squad* has that elusive blend of excitement, challenge and addictive-ness all mashed into one. Definitely on the short list for all time classics and definitely the best strategy game you'll find in the shops today.

WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	Laser Squad
PUBLISHER	Blade
PRICE	£19.95
FORMAT	ST/Amiga/PC
RELEASED	Out now

THE VERDICT

G	GRAPHICS	65
S	SOUND	80
A	ADDICTIVENESS	92
E	EXECUTION	60

• 20 • 40 • 60 • 80 • 100

Sci-fi strategy game with a surprising amount of 'game'in it. A sure-fire winner.

88

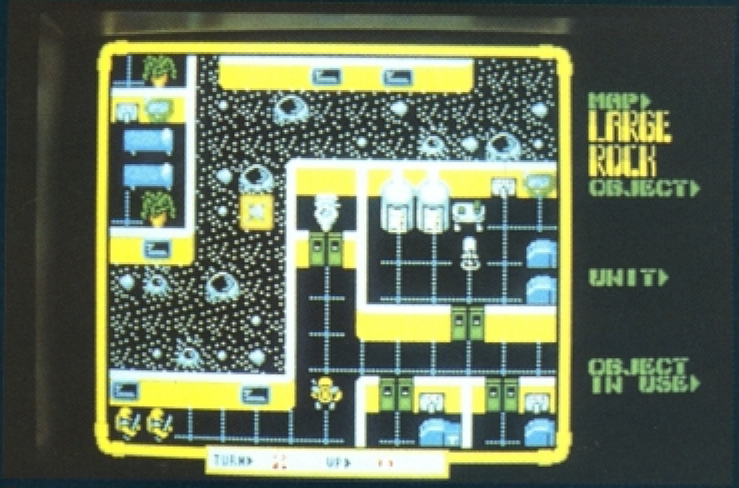


STORYBOARD

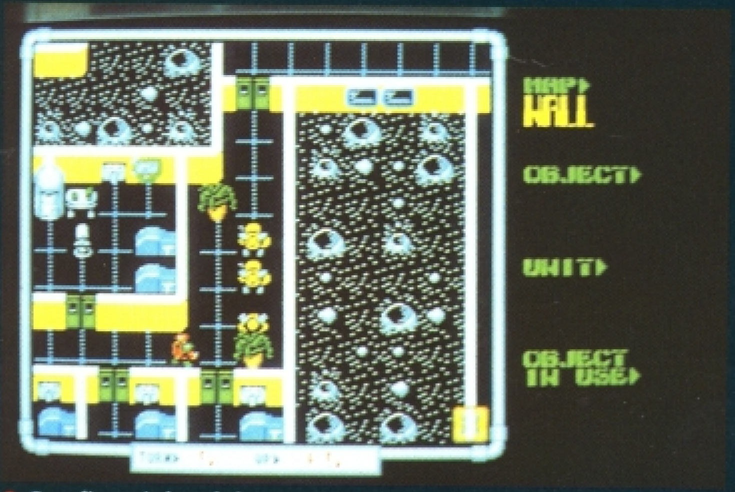
"Right my little lads, my little cherubs, mes petits onions. We are out here (in the vacuum); they are in there (in the warm). They're defending the shield generators!" said the Sarge, choking on the cigar-smoke slowly filling up inside his space helment. "Right lads. Two-four-six-eight who do we completely hate?" ALIENS!!!



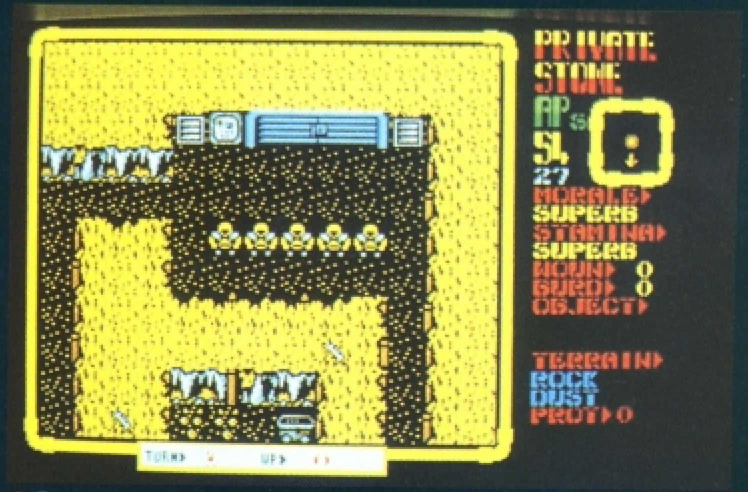
1 It took us several hours to get through the airlock. The Sarge said we should blast our way in like true commandos. We used up 4000 rounds trying to destroy the door when Private Jonlan pressed a button labelled "OPEN AIRLOCK" and the portal opened. Who says the army is full of vegetable heads?



2 I forgot to go before I left so when I spotted a toilet, I nearly peed myself with glee. "Can I go to the toilet?" I asked the Sarge. He exploded, "Anymore of that 'bladder' talk from you and you're in trouble my lad!" I was quite frightened by this and suddenly realised I wouldn't need the toilet after all. "Besides," Sarge added, "it's just a useless piece of scenery."



3 Our first sight of the enemy! The scum crept up on us from behind. The Sarge went ape with his laze-cannon and fired thousands of rounds down the corridor. When the smoke and ozone had cleared, we saw that the Sarge had disintergrated two flower-pots, a wardrobe, matching chest of drawers, and Jenkins and Anderson, our rear guards. He missed the enemy completely.



4 Our next mission was to rescue three squad-ettes who had been captured and imprisoned in a mine. Apparently, they were "close friends" of the Sarge, and he kept muttering on about "photographs" and "sheep". His idea was to plant a thermo-ynuclear charge and blow the whole mine into the next galaxy, but I knew we could use grenades to break the prisoners free.



5 We found a prisoner at last. The Sarge primed and planted the grenades outside the cell door. I said that perhaps we should warn the prisoner to stand back. The Sarge mumbled something about "joking" and "blackmailers and "sheep" again. We detonated the grenade but unfortunately it killed the prisoner and the five squad-members, left behind to "check it went off properly". The Sarge said it didn't matter because they were shandy-drinkers anyway. I respect the Sarge.



6 Despite the annihilation of three-quarters of the squad, not to mention the demise of the three prisoners we were meant to rescue, the Sarge declared the mission a complete success. But now we have to cross Paradise Valley, infested with aliens and venomous splurges. The Sarge has tied me up and told me to walk ahead so I can fall into the poisonous swamps before he does. I'm so proud... eek! Splash!

STOP

STORMLORD

Hewson/ST & Amiga/£19.99

AMIGA A

Sean: Badh the Crone has imprisoned all the fairies in Fairyland and is draining all their life energy in order to prolong his (her? its?) own life. You, Stormlord, being a good chum of Rose the Fairy and a founder member of the F.F.F. (Free Faries Forever) peace movement intend to release the said fairies and so destroy Badh.

The fairies have been imprisoned in different areas of Fairyland, and not suprisingly, many varied obstacles and puzzles stand between you and the ultimate aim of the F.F.F. For example you're going to come across giant bees, vicious goblins armed with daggers, skeletons with bouncing heads and horrible creepy crawly things.

Getting past some of these is often simply a matter of chucking an energy bolt or dagger at them, whilst others need more thought. Take the bees on level one, for instance, which stand between you and a fairy. The pot of honey about 300 screens along will probably be of some use, but how to get it close enough to the bees to distract them is the problem. You also have an eagle to call upon for assistance, which will carry you to places which would otherwise be inaccessible. As usual there is a sub-game – this time it involves throwing hearts at fairies to make them fall in love with you and then catching the tears that fall, like dew, from their sad eyes.Yeuch! I feel sick.

Stormlord is actually a conversion of a Hewson eight-bit smash from earlier this year, and is typical of Hewson's slick arcade adventure style games. One problem games like this face, I suspect, is that the 'left, right, pick up, drop' whilst perfectly suitable for the 8-bits, seems a little old and staid on 16-bit computers. In addition, *Stormlord* has the added disadvantage of seemingly dodgy collision detection at points. Both these facts meant that in the short term I found the game fairly boring and frustrating. But, being a persevering type, however, I... er... persevered, and after a while I must admit that I was rather getting into *Stormlord.*

The most attractive aspect of the game is the atmospheric background graphics which look exactly like the most stonking set you could imagine for *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* or Spencer's *The Faerie Queen.* Tons of strange flowers, warped, gnarled trees, and striking thunder and lightning abound. The main sprite however, lets the game down a little. Although it is suitably coloured and complements the atmosphere well, the animation is a little stilted and rigid at points, like when Stormlord jumps or is carried by the eagle. The sound consists of an averagely attractive ditty and wind howling through the trees. It's in the gameplay league where *Stormlord* scores the points – after initial unfriendliness, it develops into an addictive arcade adventure. The problems are well thought out, and give the game an element of challenge which will keep you coming back to it as you suss each problem.

All in all (he said, introducing the final paragraph with a typical summary statement) *Stormlord* is a flawed but addictive game and to my surprise, I found myself returning to it again and again. Definitely the type of game which will bring back many a happy memory for anyone who, like me, has moved up to a 16-bit computer from an 8-bitter.



"It's like this officer, I was standing on this floating lump of soil, when all of a sudden two dragons attacked me..."

Amiga score – ST out now

GRAPHICS	80	ADDICTIVENESS	83	OVERALL 79
SOUND	78	EXECUTION	79	

XENOPHOBE

Microstyle/ST & Amiga/£24.99

S T

Paul: "It's just like the Sinclair version," said Jackie of *Your Sinclair,* poking her head round the door. Well, I've nothing against Speccies but that's hardly a great introduction to a 16-bit game. But it's about the kindest thing that can be said about this little number.

The action takes place on a variety of different locations (see if you can spot the difference between them) in a future universe. You have to purge these places of nasty slimey aliens before they completely take over.

Unfortunately the Exterminators – the good guys – are about as exciting to watch as Arsenal at home. The most distinctive character looks like a reject from *Dynamite Dux* and the rest resemble the sort of faceless blurrs normally found in football sims. Graphically it's also a let down.

The monsters work quite well and have a nasty habit of changing form during the battle. The Critters were the ones that I loved to hate – horrid, crawly things that follow you around like yesterday's garlic bread. In fact, there are rather too many monsters at one time. The screen is often cluttered with *Dr Who* rejects. Just keep firing and you're bound to hit something, though you can't always tell what you've hit or what's hitting you. Skill is certainly less of a premium in this game than a strong trigger finger.

The other problem is that you can blast one of the oncoming Rollerbabies with enough hardware to put the wind up Gaddafi, and still end up polishing the floor with your brand new 501s. Not all are so persistent. If there is a name for fear of doorways then the Critters have got it. You go through a door with an entire family of the things hanging off your testes and then there you are on the other side without so much as an embarrassing itch.

The game does have some nice graphical touches. For example, you can angle your gun instead of always firing in straight lines from the hip. This is fairly useful, to say nothing of satisfying, when those wretched Critters start nibbling round your ankles and cast wistful glances upwards. But to be honest, I spent most of this game on my knees. The only incentive stopping me from grovelling about on my knees were the various objects I kept being told to pick up and even these often seemed more trouble than they were worth

My final grouse is that I never knew how well I was doing. Failure to kill enough aliens within the time limit means the destruction of a planet or spaceship. Whenever I was dematerialised at the end of a mission, I was never sure if I was going to get a medal or be melted.

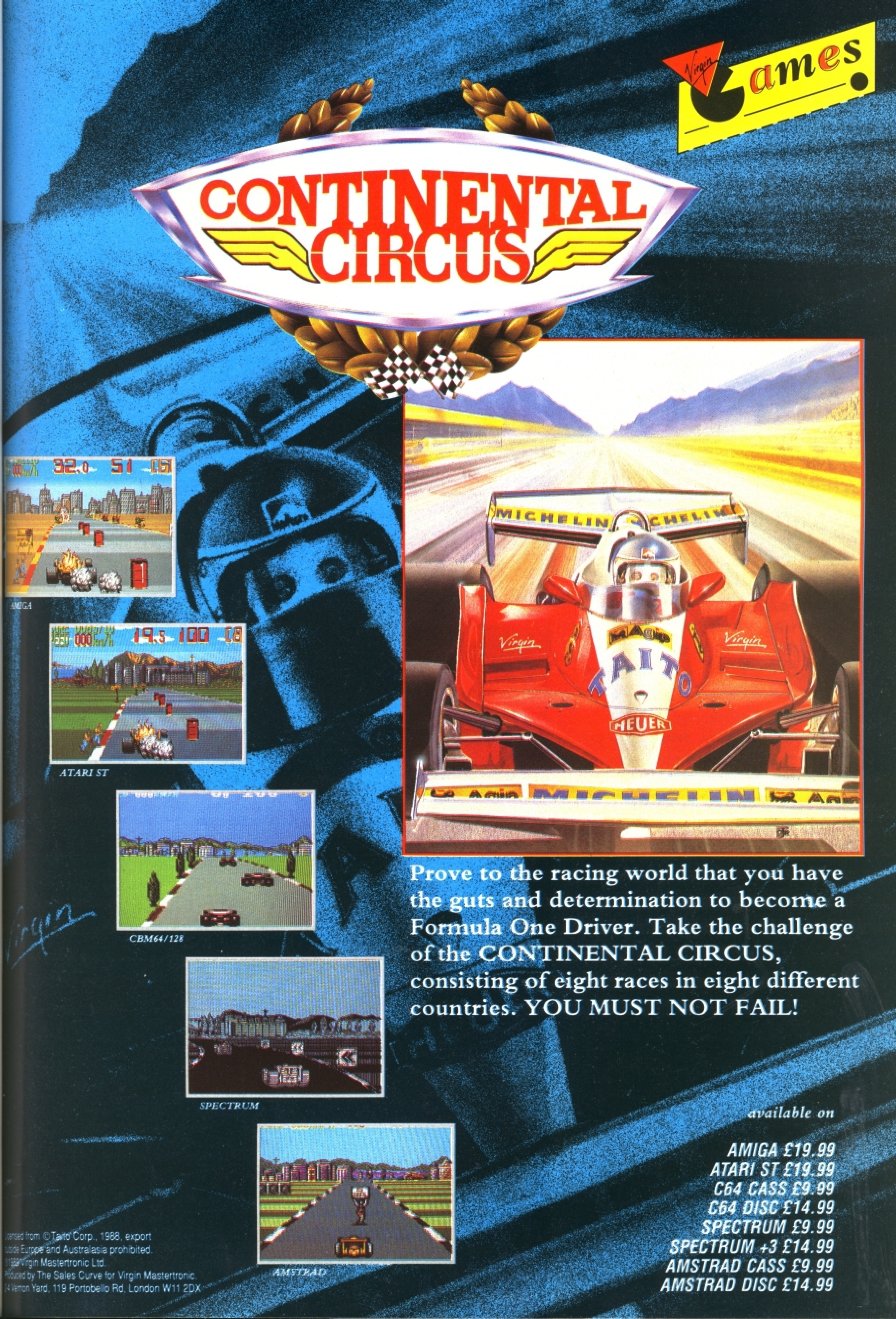
Well, there it is. A rather irritating shoot 'em up in which the good ideas never quite come off. Instead the screen becomes cluttered with confusing monsters and faceless heroes. In the end I couldn't give a monkey's who won.



"I say I say I say, what's all this green slime?" "Flue?" "No, I came by teleporter – BOOM BOOM!"

ST Score – Amiga out now

GRAPHICS	70	ADDICTIVENESS	57	OVERALL 67
SOUND	76	EXECUTION	62	


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DOSH EATERS

Deep in the darkest depths of London lies a place more secret than the Batcave and more taxing on your wallet than a night out at Stringfellows! ZERO's *Alan Tomkins* and *Matt Bielby* went 'pockets-a-bulgin' to the Electrocoin warehouse to turn on, tune in and freak out at the latest and greatest dosh eaters in town.

This particular Electrocoin *(and we're not gonna tell you where it is - so there! Ed)* is the place where most of the coin-ops that find their way into your local arcades start off life in this country. It was set up ten years ago by John Steigides and Don Holman. In the early days they brought you the likes of *Pacman, Space Invaders* and *Defender* – today they've probably already got next year's Christmas number one. This month, two of the main contenders for the Kung Fu crown (currently held by *Bad Dudes*) are fighting it out. One of 'em, *Special Project Y,* isn't a classic, but it does have that all important "I'll just give it one more go" factor......

SPECIAL PROJECT Y

Konami/50p a go

Watch your back 007 'cos someone's been checking out your movies. Yes folks, *Special Project Y* begins with the same spotlight sequence you see at the beginning of all the Bond films.

Once the game gets started you find yourself flying across the sea *Space Harrier* style towards an island, but don't let that deceive you. Just when you think it's safe to zoom across the water, a huge mother of a transport plane drops in from the top of the screen for a cuppa and belches out an 'orrible shower of nasties – it's at this point that you discover what the fire button is for!

Wipe out the first wave and there's a few *Black Hawk* type helicopters waiting to unleash yet more baddies; if you survive those, it's onto the second level for yet more mayhem.

Having landed on the island the action changes to a horizontal scroll. Here you have to fight your way towards a rock-topped building (this involves fighting a whole load of new meanies, Kung Fu-style) jumping up to gangways platform-fashion and kicking the sh.... *(Snip....Ed)* out of even more thugs.

As you progress you get the chance to pick up a selection of fire arms including grenades (hold onto these 'cos you'll need them later to kill the end-of-level fat thug). If you survive to the third level (you jammy sod) you've made it into the building. Now you have to fight your way through room after room of even more highly antisocial individuals until you reach level four, where you find yourself outside once again with more platform-type balconies to negotiate.

If you're a real hot-shot you'll end up outside a fenced-off mansion where you'll confront a real bad mother in a black overcoat. Beat this guy to a pulp, run up the path toward the mansion and you'll find yourself face to face with... er, I'm not telling, you'll have to go and play it!

Special Project Y has excellent graphics, great gameplay and it's sure to keep you entertained for many a wet weekend. Konami has designed this with very well defined sprites and enough colours to keep you glued.



Look behind you! You maybe able to walk on water, but these jokers can too and the one with the hang glider's about to knock your block off.



Hey, what's all this? I didn't ask for an escort. Wonder if there are any sharks below?



There I was bobbin' along, then all of a sudden *Mike Smith* drops in – gets everywhere doesn't he?



THE SCORE

You'll be pleased to know we've kept the ratings pretty simple here in Dosh Eaters. The overall mark out of five stars (well Space Invaders actually) shows our general response to the game – it's not just a reflection of the game's graphics or playability. For example five Space Invaders indicate a mega game, while a single alien - well, er, a bit of a duffer...



AQUAJACK

Taito/30p a go

This multi-level hovercraft extravaganza plays along vaguely *Op Wolfish* lines, with you controlling an on-screen crosshair cursor and your little red craft just bumping along after it. You get two weapons (ordinary bullets and super missiles) and a jump function, allowing you to clear logs and floating mines etc. Pretty graphics, an easily animated central sprite (it's just a big red lump, really) and the normal range of tank, helicopter and gunboat adversaries make it a playable variation on the theme.

OMEGA ALPHA

UDL/20p a go

This is a bog standard vertical scroller, with little else to recommend about it. The honeycomb backdrops are vaguely attractive, while your ship makes a pretty catherine wheel explosion when it dies and, um, that's it. There are the usual number of power-ups (though they all seem to do the same thing) and I can't be bothered to write anything else about it. Next!

SKY ADVENTURE

Alpha/20p a go

As cheapo vertical scrollers go (there seem to be a fair number of them about at the moment) this ain't half bad. From the '30s air race title screens to the spooky mad-dictator-crossed-with-the-land-that-time-forgot storyline, it's all vaguely charming - and slightly more than vaguely well executed too. You get a choice of four old fighter planes to fly in, each equipped with twin machine guns and an extra special weapon (bombs and a flock of mini aeroplanes etc) while the baddies range from fire-breathing dinos to boomerang-chucking natives, with the enemy squadrons of the evil General Claude himself, in between. Not too bad at all - give it a go!

SAGAIA

Taito/50p a go

What's all this 'sagaia' stuff then? Unfortunately my (rather non-existent) grasp of Japanese means it's all Greek to me (or something). Apparently, though, a 'sagaia' involves flying a little space ship along and shooting things. Ho hum. So much for originality.

Still, as hopelessly unimaginative shoot 'em ups go, Sagaia isn't half bad. It lives in an impressively big (and painfully difficult to photograph) cabinet with two (yes, two!) screens lodged side by side inside. You fly in from the left of one screen as the waves of baddies zoom in from the far right of the other – then the fun begins. It all seems quite easy at first – the bad guys have to cross two screens to get to you (which means there's plenty of time to blast them) and power-up icons are plentiful.



Blimey! It's a giant solar fish thing! Looks like we're in deep troub here, boys!

Then suddenly it all gets very tricky. Solar flares rip your ship to shreds, giant fish leap out of the flames beneath you and even the ordinary aliens become extra sneaky – entering from behind (*Lordy! Ed.*). The screen flips over and scrolls the other way occasionally too, which is trés confusing.

The first level (which I've just been blathering on about) takes place over the surface of the sun, but later goes to Mercury, Venus and successive planets out to Jupiter (but I didn't get that far.) Ahem. Basically this two screen business is a fairly playable gimmick (sprites only disappear down the crack between them for the briefest of pico seconds) but I doubt the game'll go down as a real coin-op classic.

BIG RUN

Taito/£1 a go

What's the point of a sit-down driving game without a hydraulic cabinet, eh? No answer to that one – have you, Taito? Oh, um, you have? Ah, it seems *Big Run* , like most racing games, does come in a hydraulic cabinet if you want one, but most arcades don't 'cos: a) they cost more and: b) they're too heavy to lug about. Even more of a disappointment is the fact that the game is designed to be linked up with loads of other *Big Run* cabinets – so everyone playing is racing against each other – but no arcades outside Japan (and perhaps the USA) have enough machines to do it. Shame.

Still, even in 'boring' non-hydraulic, non-linked up mode *Big Run* turns out to be a surprisingly jaunty little bash. Your motor – in this case a rally-going Porsche Turbo – has all the usual controls (two gears, a brake and a throttle pedal) to keep it vaguely under control, plus a neat horn gimmick which, when honked, clears other cars out of the way. All would be hunky dory, but there are some of the twistiest, turniest mountain paths around helping to send you spinning off. Which I did – a lot!

I've a few complaints though. Chiefly that the graphics seem a touch blocky and crude, but it all runs fast and while *Big Run* won't break any barriers it will win a fair few friends, I think. It's certainly more playable than *Outrun*. Give it a go anyway.



***Big Run* is based on the Paris-Dakar rally. There are numerous stages, each one a nightmare of twisty mountain passes, bumpy surfaces and skiddy bends. Yikes!**

CRIME CITY

Talsumi/50p a go

Here's yet another clone from the people who brought you *Bad Dudes*, with just a touch of *Operation Wolf* thrown in for good measure. Yes, what we have here is a two player, horizontal-scrolling Kung Fu-pick-up-a-gun-and-blow-the-suckers-away job. Then just when you're getting into it, the action suddenly changes to a 3D shoot- out.

The game starts, as you've already guessed, on the city streets. Scrolling along you're given the chance to beat up assorted thugs, then pick up a selection of firearms and blow away a bloomin' great black doberman. Level two is a hoot. Here you jump across the top of speeding cars and trucks and onto hanging platforms to progress on your way. I loved the Hell's Angels, who roar in with their choppers. After the fun comes some real hard fighting in an underground car park, where the action keeps switching between 3D and horizontal scrolling.



There I was with my fistful of dollars when these dudes started coming at me from all directions. Suddenly it was *Gunfight At The OK Corral* for me and curtains for those punks!

Survive all this and you find yourself in a bank. Your job here is two-fold – first you have to blow away the baddies, then rescue the hostages. Once you're outside again, you move from a scrap-yard to a seafront setting, rescuing more hostages on the way. If you're a glutton for punishment you find yourself back on the city streets again, but this time the urban guerrillas have flame throwers and petrol bombs, plus more bloody dobermans!

The sprites in *Crime City* are medium sized and well drawn. The colour choice is good and though not an earth-stopper, it's fun to play and should end up in most arcades.



Isn't there something up with the scale here or is this the biggest T72 assault tank in the world?

UN SQUADRON

Capcom/50p a go

The latest in a long line of games from Capcom is a bit of a let-down, I'm afraid. The presentation graphics are well laid out and detailed, with the first screen giving you all the usual crap about your all important mission to save the world. Then you get a screen with three youthful pilots and you have to choose between a Tomcat and an A10. Having made your selection your pilot disappears and your plane zooms off to do battle.

It's when the game screen comes on that the graphics go downhill and poorly-drawn planes and backgrounds abound. If this one ever makes it onto home computers, some graphic artist's going to have a field day improving on them. Thankfully the gameplay is better than the graphics, even if it is a cross between *Defender* and *Silkworm*. It's a horizontal shoot 'em up and all the usuals are there including extra weapons. Level one sees you blastin' the hell out of an oil refinery complex. Enemies include Hind 24 helicopters and T72 tanks so you could almost call this *Commie Bashing Squadron*. This two-player game is not up to Capcom's usual standard.



Come here little one – I've got something for you. How about a bazooka or a neutron bomb?

CONVERSION CRAZY

It's becoming the rule in home computers that in order to get the Christmas No 1, you have to convert an arcade giant. This year is no exception. Domark has *Hard Drivin'* (you know the driving game where all those stupid heads look down on you as you screw up). Ocean has a double-barrelled attack with *Chase HQ* where you drive a black Porsche and *Operation Thunderbolt* – the spy rescue shoot 'em up.

Meanwhile, Activision is firing a broadside with *Altered Beast, Super Wonder Boy* and *Dynamite Dux*, plus *Power Drift* and then early in 1990 it's giving us *Galaxy Force*.

Who'll get the jackpot this year? Only you have the answer to that one, so go out and vote with your nickers. (For the benefit of the Ed - that's not sexist - it's cockney slang for money) *(What? Ed.)*

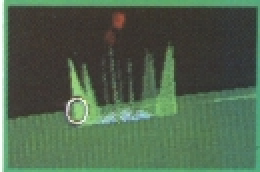
TOP OF THE 'OPs!

We at ZERO want to know your favourite arcade – so no matter where you live, whether it be Lands End or Llandudno, let us know about it and its games. For instance – did you know that the arcade at Pontin's Holiday Camp at Brean Sands *(Apparently it's somewhere in yokel land out West. Ed.)* has *Outrun Turbo* and *Continental Circus* plus another two dozen rave games?

But for the most 'up front and street cred' arcade in the land I recommend Casino Entertainment in London's Tottenham Court Road near Goodge Street tube station. They've got games in there you ain't never gonna see anywhere else and they get all the big ones first. From your replies we'll print a Top Ten Arcade Chart each month. And don't forget to send in your high scores and see your name up in lights on our High Score Table, plus any hints and tips. So put pen to paper and send them to Dosh Eaters, ZERO, 14 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1DE.

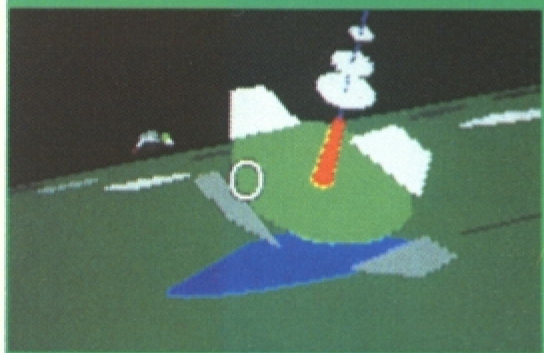


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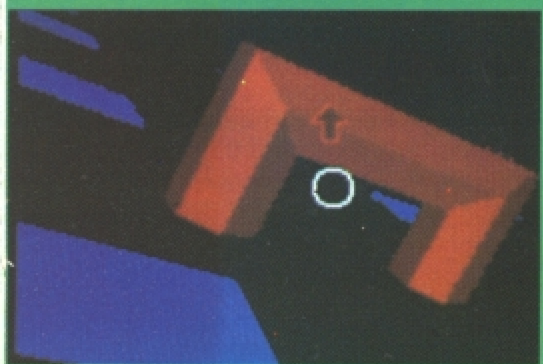
INTERPHASE

We sellotaped *Duncan MacDonald* and *Sean Kelly* onto an 'X particle', accelerated them to 97 per cent the speed of light, and shot them into the Dreamtrack Corporation's Security Computer to have a look at *Interphase*. It was a tricky process, (Sean bruised his little finger) but we'll go to any lengths for you lot!



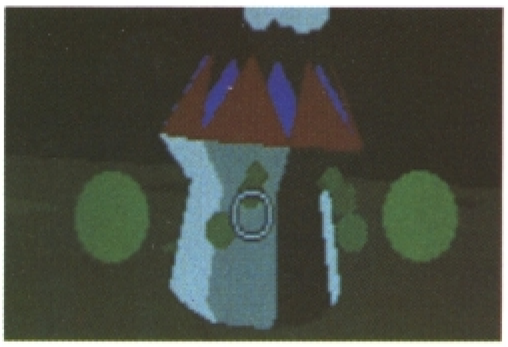
Set in the not too distant future, the world of *Interphase* comes at a time when everyone has a lot of spare time on their hands, due to the total automation of most industries. As a result, the leisure industry has expanded beyond all recognition, and one particular form of entertainment has come to dominate: the science of Dream Recording and DreamTracks.

DreamTracks (recorded patterns of imagination) which are produced by multi-national corporations but the 'Dreamers' are being subliminally brainwashed by the power classes who are peppering the DreamTracks with pro-government propoganda. Quite frankly, this isn't cricket. And one Dreamer swears to do something about it.



Chadd (the Dreamer in question) builds something called the Interphase, which sproings his mind inside the Security Computer – where he can basically bugger up the whole caboodle. It's a bit like a cross between *Tron, Max Headroom, Joe 90* and *Lassie Finds Yet Another Boy Stuck In A Dangerous Mineshaft.*

Dunc: Right. You have 12 floor-plans (the different levels) to study and you have to allow your 'girlfriend' to pass from one end of each floor to the other without walking into any hazards. For instance, there are video cameras, which, if they spot her, will relay the information to security droids who will then track her down and kill her. Turning a camera off, then, is a good idea, but to do it you have to go into the other bit of the game – the 3D world 'inside the computer'. You can summon up info on what the camera 'off-switch' looks like and fire up the navigation computer (which will show you the way to go) before you plunge into this weird world.



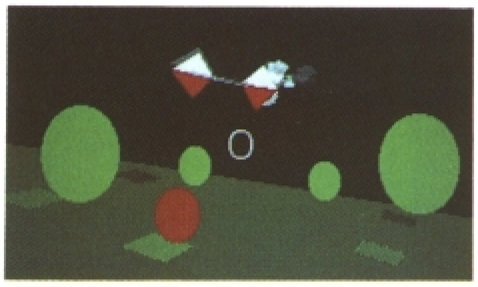
Aha! There's the doofer that launches the aeroplane thingies. It's ripe for a homing missile, I'll be bound.

It's really like being inside a rather bizarre computer. All you need to know is that the animation is absolutely first class. Oh, and your 'ship' is controlled entirely by mouse, so get a ZERO mouse mat. (Out soon!) Once you've tracked down the camera switch, shoot it, and the camera is turned off. Time to go back to the map screen to plot your chick's assault further.

As you progress through the levels, you'll encounter all manner of hazards to interact with in the 3D environment: locked doors (er, you need to open them); turntables (they send guards off in directions of your choosing); pressure pads (you need to avoid them. Um, and sometimes you don't); electrified floor (frazzles the guards, unless your chick touches them first in which case they frazzle her); workshop systems (where you can manufacture items you have accidentally blasted and then realised you need). And there's more, but this is a mission of discovery, so I won't spoil it for you. Basically it's a case of looking at the map, thinking "how on earth can I do that?" then sussing it out and going inside the computer to carry the plan out in shoot 'em-up style.

So how does the mix of brain-power and razor-sharp reactions match up? Is it a perfect blend or are you left wanting to jump out of your top window? Um, no actually. To my way of thinking it comes down too heavily on the cerebral with not enough thought to the zapping.

The shoot 'em-up element isn't demanding enough to satisfy someone who wants to 'get things before they get him'. Maybe it gets a lot harder on the later levels, but the trickiness of the



Uh-oh! Under attack from a futuristic cabbage crate (ie: a plane).

strategy element can bog down the most ardent shoot 'em-up fan until he (or she) just gives up. Maybe I haven't applied enough 'thought' to the problem at hand, but there you are – that's how I feel in IQ tests. On the other hand, the dedicated strategy buff might well find the 'arcade' sequences (regardless of the impressive graphics and sound) something of a bind.

However, there's a 'sub-set'of people with the IQ of Sir Clive Sinclair, the reflexes of Roadrunner and the patience of a lighthouse keeper, who will love this game. It's a blinkin' clever little idea and though difficult, it's implemented with sheer class. .

THE VERDICT

G	GRAPHICS	94
S	SOUND	94
A	ADDICTIVENESS	80
E	EXECUTION	94

• 20 • 40 • 60 • 80 • 100

A fiendishly canny strategy/ shoot 'em up with outstanding graphics and brilliant sound. BUT... it gets too hard FAR too quickly.

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1. The starting point for your chick

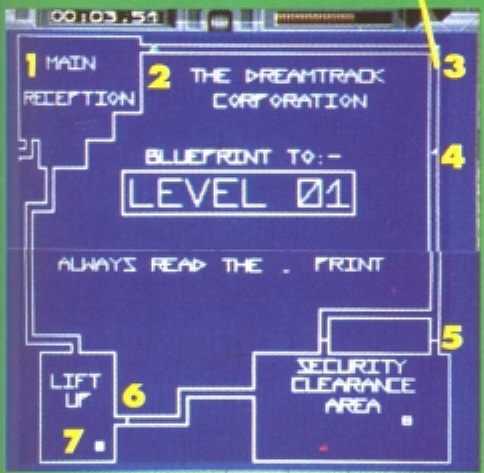
2. The first locked door. But don't unlock it until you've dealt with the first camera

3. The first camera. This needs to be switched off by Chadd.

4. The second camera. Leave this on. As your 'babe' passes, it'll set a defence droid into motion on its pre-set path – which means it won't be 'in the way' a bit later on.







5. Another locked door.

6. Another one. (Yawn).

7. The lift. "Going up to level two!"

8. This shows the power of magnification available. It's crucial that you zoom in and check things out – what looks like a full stop might actually be a picture of the programmers (or something).

WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	Interphase
PUBLISHER	Mirrorsoft
PRICE	£24.95
FORMAT	ST/Amiga
RELEASED	December

Sean: Let's face it, the chances of getting the brain of a technical genius and the brain of a mega game designer squodged into the same skull are practically nil. So, when a game like this comes along, pushing back the graphics barriers in huge chunks, fun-wise they're generally about as exciting as playing tiddlywinks with your auntie who died last year.

ImageWorks, doubtless aware of this problemette, got round it by getting one person to design it, and another person to work on the actual gameplay. Two brains, two specialists and two skulls.

Well, almost. It's the fastest solid 3D ever but to be honest, this fact doesn't impress me too much. The graphics will be improved on eventually, or maybe within months, and excellent games have certainly been created without stretching limits, so barrier-breaking is no real indication of playability. The



Here's the berk with the electrical cable sellotaped to the back of his 'leathers'. Bleeeeegh! What a gimp!

only way to judge any game is by comparing it to others currently available on the market.

Fortunately, *Interphase* manages to create a believable, imaginative 3D world, and pack in an addictive challenge to boot. You will be able to tell from the screenshots that *Interphase* has truly astounding graphics, but what you won't be able to glean, is the smoothness and speed with which the screen updates – scrolling is too simple a word to describe what happens. This smoothness, which I would put on a par with some animated films, really does create the feeling of 'being there' more than any other computer game I've played. Basically, the graphics are superlative. In addition the sounds are very 'science fictiony', and again contribute greatly to the overall atmosphere of the game.

The actual game, once past the cyberpunk scenario, is a sort of strategic shoot 'em up. Each level begins with a thorough examination of the map, and a route must be planned ahead for the girlie if she's going to avoid getting fried on an electric pressure pad or mashed by some defence droid. Even the map section is impressively presented, an indication that attention has been paid to perfecting every aspect of the game. Needless to say, the shoot 'em up sections of each floor are brilliant, and you can either go straight for your objective as fast as possible, or stroll around taking pot shots at anything that strays within range. It's brilliant fun either way.

All is not sweetness and light, however. At the end of each level is a section which involves guiding your craft through a red and white stripey tunnel. Maybe I'm just crap at steering or something, but I found this to be pretty difficult. Even if I finished a level without losing too much energy, I generally lost loads in the tunnel. Personally I think it was all rather distracting, as it seemed to be tacked onto the end of each level for the sake of it, and it added nothing to the game. Maybe that's just me, though.

HASSLE FACTOR: 1
The tackiest, most awful 'start of game' sequence ever. Has to be seen to be beleived, but once is enough.

I also wonder about the actual 'learning curve', and whether it gets too difficult too quickly, thus forcing some people to reach an impasse and give up. This said, I suppose some smart arse is bound to write in within about two days with the complete solution.

Still, chucking my personal gripes through the round window, I am certain that no one who buys *Interphase* can fail to be impressed by the mix of astounding graphics and addictive gameplay. It's a thoroughly fab game and I wouldn't hesitate recommending it to anybody.

THE VERDICT

G	GRAPHICS	95
S	SOUND	80
A	ADDICTIVENESS	95
E	EXECUTION	85

• 20 • 40 • 60 • 80 • 100

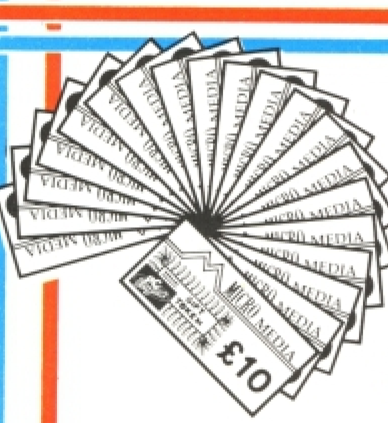
Excellent blend of breathtaking graphics and addictive gameplay. Yet another impressive game courtesy of Imageworks.

86

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PC Engine

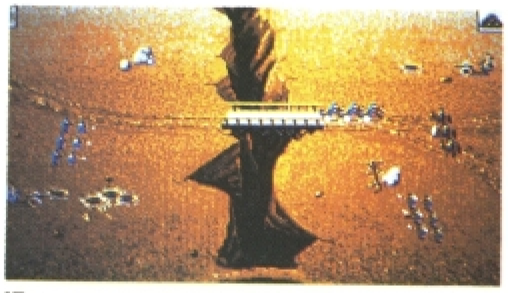
NORTH AND SOUTH

Infogrames/ST & Amiga/£24.99

AMIGA A

Sean: Now before you get confused, let me just explain something. *North And South* is the British version of a French game based on a Belgian comic about the American Civil War. Everybody got that? Good. Now let's begin, but first, for all those of you dismayed at the thought of one of those strange strategy games that people with beards and letters after their name find so appealing, fear not. It isn't one of those games. Um, well it is, but not if you don't want it to be. (*Eh? Ed.*)

Firstly, as it's based on the American Civil War, it can be played as a fairly straightforward but prettily presented strategy game. Moving your forces round the map, you must defeat the enemy, and victory is largely dependent upon protecting your rail network and the ports. Random elements can be integrated into the game, such as rainstorms (these prevent batallions from moving) and the arrival of boats at the port carrying soldiers (whose soldiers depends upon who is occupying the port at the time).

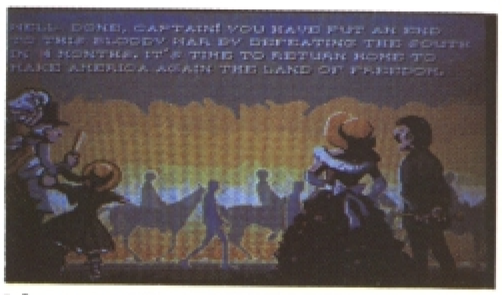


'Ere we go, 'ere we go, 'ere we go, half a league, half a league, half a league... You get the idea.

In addition, it can be played as a strategy game where victory depends on you defeating the enemy in various arcade sections. There are three of these, the first and most important being the battlefield sequence, in which you must fight the opposition. Obvious, really. In the next one, you get the chance to steal money from the enemy's trains, by boarding at the back and working your way to the front.

Finally, there's a section where you must capture the opposition's fort. This is a race against the clock to reach the flagpole. Between you and victory stand enemy soldiers, booby traps, broken paths and dogs who attack you. Eeeek!

The one thing everyone in the ZERO office said about *North And South* was 'Cor... Dunnit look good' and there's no doubt that it's an incredibly slick game. From start to finish, the cartoony graphics and animation are brilliant. Even the opening sequence, where the options are set, is inventively designed and superbly presented. The sound is likewise unusual, but excellent, and perfectly complements the cartoony graphics. The arcade sequences are impressively presented and great fun, if a little difficult, and do actually play pretty well. *North And South* has also got some very original and very funny sound effects. For instance, you start the game by poking your cursor at a cameraman's derrière.



I love a story with a happy ending.

All in all, a pretty good mix of arcade sequences and strategy. I doubt if it will appeal to hardened strategists, but it does introduce an element of planning and organisation for those who are normally rabid joystick wagglers. However, I'm not sure that it will stay in many people's drives for long, as it seemed fairly straightforward after a while. Still, it's really good fun and well worth a look, but give it the once-over before you buy.

Amiga Score – ST out now

GRAPHICS	88	ADDICTIVENESS	60	OVERALL 74
SOUND	85	EXECUTION	70	

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*roughly

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You'll want to know what to do this month though, won't you? Well, we're not going to tell you (ho ho ho). Oh, okay then but first a word from our sponsors: Part two of this amazing competition is being brought to you by... 1) The grand old folk at Virgin Mastertronic 2) The sterling people from Goodmans 3) Us, the spiffing ZERO team and 4) An extremely whiffy 'salty sea-dog' fishing trawler captain from Norway called Jurgen Jugennson. (*Are you sure about number four? Ed*).

IT'S A STIFFY...

And you're holding it. Yes, it's here - the second part of the most fabulistic competition in the history of the known universe (and beyond). If you've still got last month's map then you're two thirds of the way home (presuming you get all the 'directions' right that is). If you haven't got last month's map then you're... er... well you're buggered really. YOU NEED THE MAP! Nab a back issue!

Whoops! I'm afraid we forgot to add on our map in Issue One the following acknowledgements: Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (c) Crown Copywright. Reproduced by permission of Geographers' A-Z Map Co. Ltd. Sorry!

ZERO Virgin MASTERTRONIC

THE ZERO/VIRGIN MASTERTRONIC COMPETITION

THE STIFFY CONTINUES

If you worked out the starting place last month (let's face it, it wasn't such a stiffy after all) then you're laughing. Why are you laughing? Because you start from the same point this month as well – that's why! Mind you, those of you who didn't work out where last month's starting point was are going to be a bit miffed (serves you right for being thick though – so don't blame us. Go and buy an encyclopedia). Anyway, here are this month's clues...

Go back to where you started last month. Right, now go back up the 'sausagey' road, but at the top turn left, not right. Walk down this road and take the third right (opposite 'crappy green spiky leaf you get at Christmas' Lodge Gardens). This third right will take you through to a lane which goes down and up. Head up, and bear right. Keep going for a few yards and take a note of the name of the Close to starboard (before the 'six sided road'). Now turn round, head back down again and swim across the pond – there only seems to be one that you're allowed in, so be lawful. Do a little dance on the bandstand (if you feel in a 'get down and boogie' sort of mood) and chug on up and over the brow of the hill. This will bring you onto a road (well, it's called a hill, but it's a road as well). Carry on down to the station and get on a train. Go to the next station and get out on the main road. Locate Monnery Road and take the QUICKEST route there. This will take you through a road with a rather crap Welsh sounding name. Jot it down.

I'm afraid there's no time to go into the Gold Run now.... It'll be RIGHT at the beginning of the next show. Goodbye. See you then. (Grovel grovel).



What 'Bob' is trying to say is that we're not going to give you the final clues and the entry coupon here: we'll be doing it next month – in the final part of the competition – with details of what to do with the information gleaned so far (so you can actually fill the entry coupon in!) And with the chance to get your hands on some of the £50,000 worth of prizes. You'd be rather stupid NOT to fill it in. Goodbye. See you next month. (Grovel grovel).



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CRYSTAL TIPS*

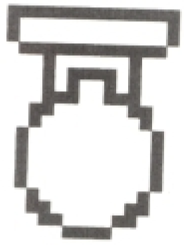
*AND ALISTAIR

Hold onto your bladders, chums! *David McCandless* is here with a huge deluge* of tips, hints, maps, cheats and... um... that's it, really.

(*more of a trickle, actually.)

GUTLESS

Here in *Gutless Gully* is where all you spineless wonders who are a bit rubbish find solace by using a cheat mode. Ugh! A cheat mode! The mere thought of using a... a cheat mode makes us skilful players want to reassert our manhood by drinking five tanker-loads of mega-strong bum-roasting special-brew (for breakfast). Thanks go to bronzed PR supremo, *Danielle Woodyatt*, for the following tips.



VIGILANTE

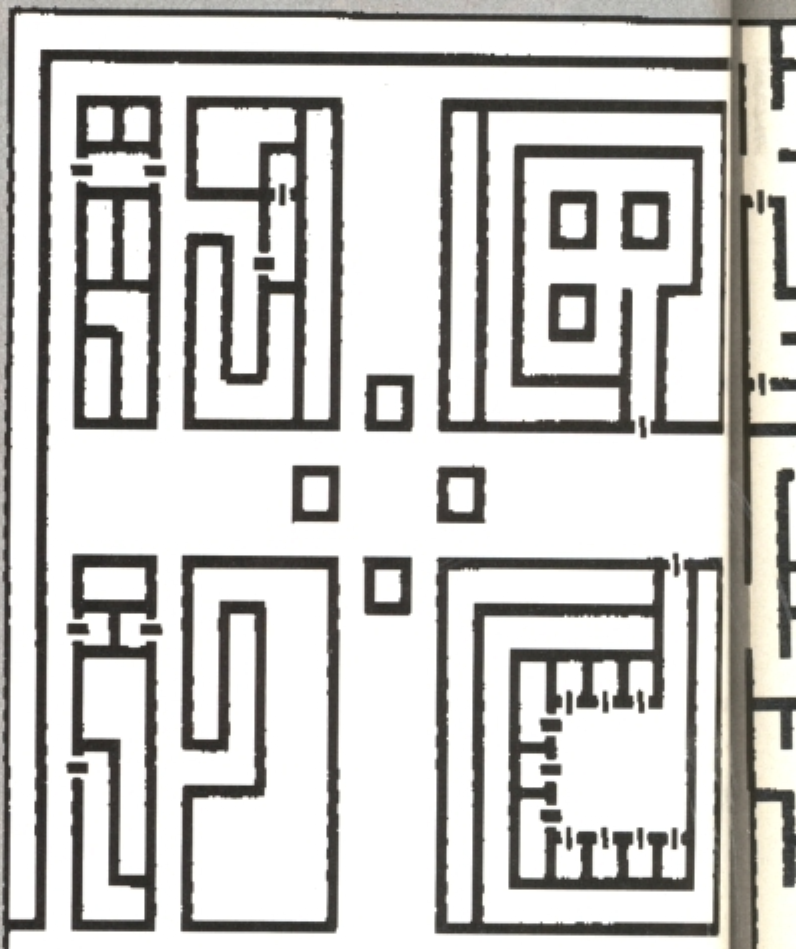
A rather perplexing little cheat mode-ette, this. Get a high score (simplicity in itself) and then enter your name as either 'POOKY IS MY PAL' on the **ST**, or 'GREEN CRYSTAL' if you're using an **Amiga**. Remember to include the spaces in both cases. Then, when you restart, F1 will give you a life and F8 will advance you to the next level.

LAST DUEL

On the **ST** and **Amiga**, use the game with F9 and hold the HELP key down with left shift and '1'. Unpause and the function keys will take you through the levels while F8 gives you five extra lives. For multiple **PC** cheats type 'STRIDER' on the game screen. Then F9 will teleport you to the next level, F8 will give player one five lives, and F7 will do the same for player two (the snivelling sneak).

COLON EXPLORATION TEAM

Warning! You are about to enter the brown-nose zone. Parched for tips this month, I wondered how I could fill these oh-so-beloved pages. I spent a night tossing and turning (and tossing some more) in an effort to decide. Finally I turned to the oh-so brilliant Electronic Arts for help. Angelic *Lesley Mansford* heard my grovelling plea and very kindly sent me several tomes of tips and hunt books for EA games. Here's a selected few for *Bard's Tale I*. And now for the plug: this mega book and others like it can be obtained from the EA Customer Service Desk at £5.00 each. There are titles like *Sentinel Worlds*, *Wasteland*, and *Bard's Tale II*. And they're great, they're brill, they're... (*I think they've possibly got the message now – Ed.*)



THE WINE CELLAR

SLOW THINGS OF THE UNIVERSE



No.1: THE THREE-TOED SLOTH
The sluggardly three-toed sloth only 'goes to the toilet' when it rains. This is because the pathetic creature is so useless at running away that it daren't risk blowing its cover by accidentally 'wee weeing' on a foe's head whilst dithering through the treetops. Hah!

GULLY

INDIANA JONES

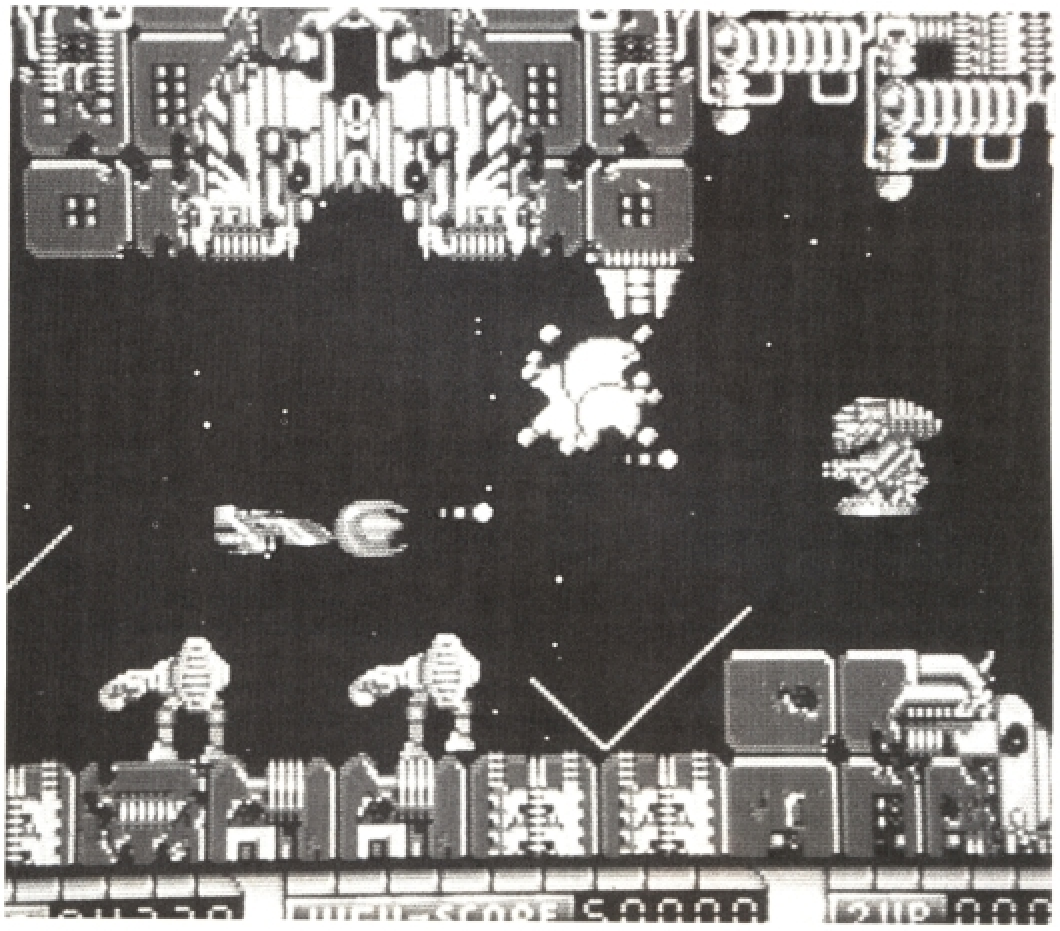
Cor, you've got to be a shandy-man if you can't complete this game. On the title screen type IEHOVA (*the Latin spelling of Jehovah – intellectual Ed.*) and the screen will flash grey if you've done it right. Then '2' will teleport you to the pre-fixed points in the level, 'L' will advance you to the next level, and 'I' will give you an icon.

STRIDER

Pause the game with F9 then hold down the HELP key with left shift and '1'. After unpausing, keys 1,2,3,4,5 will take you to the respective level, while F1, F2, F3, F4 will take you to the flash-points of the levels.

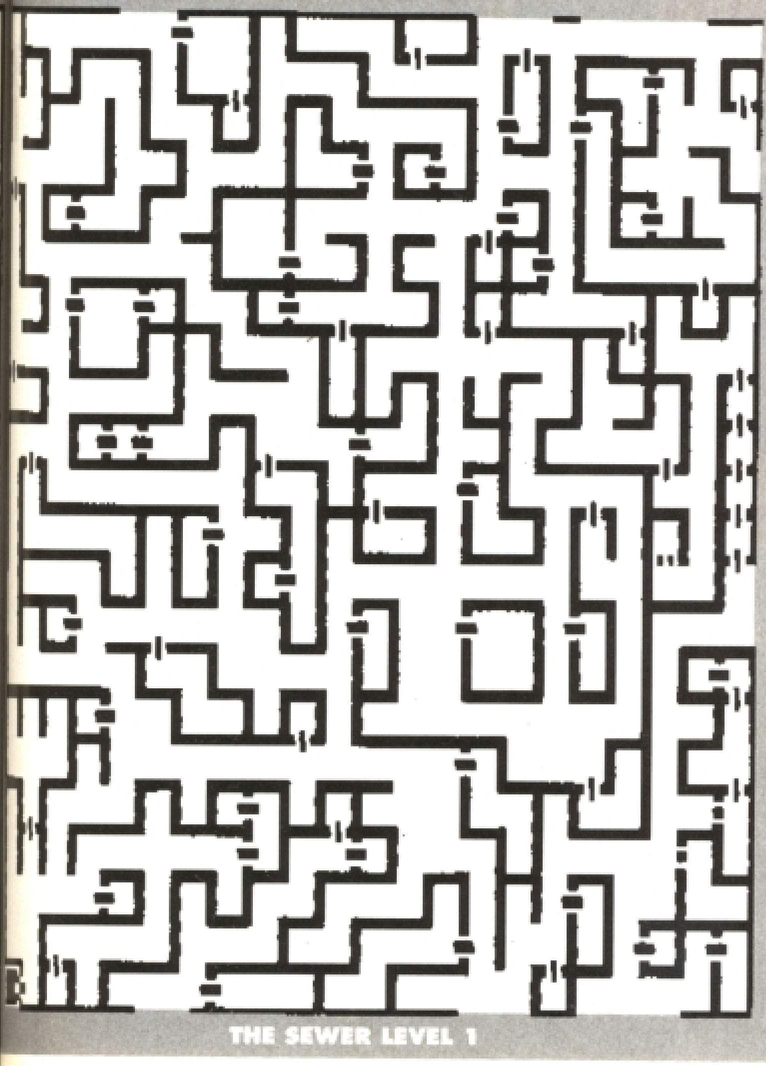
SPHERICAL

Type 'BLADERUNNER' on the menu screen for a variety of pathetically gutless effects.

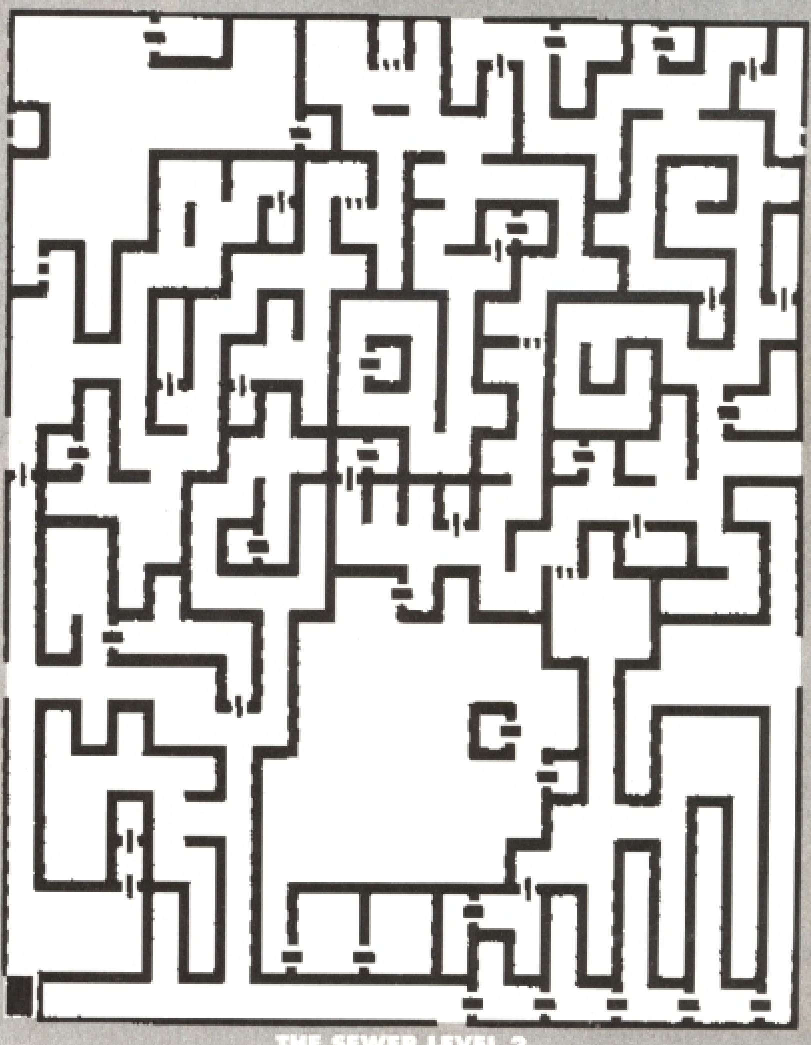


DENARIS

Okay, this is a hard game but that's no excuse. To receive infinite lives, hold down 'Z' when the 'insert data disk' prompt appears, then put the mouse in the joystick port and hold down the right mouse button while it loads.



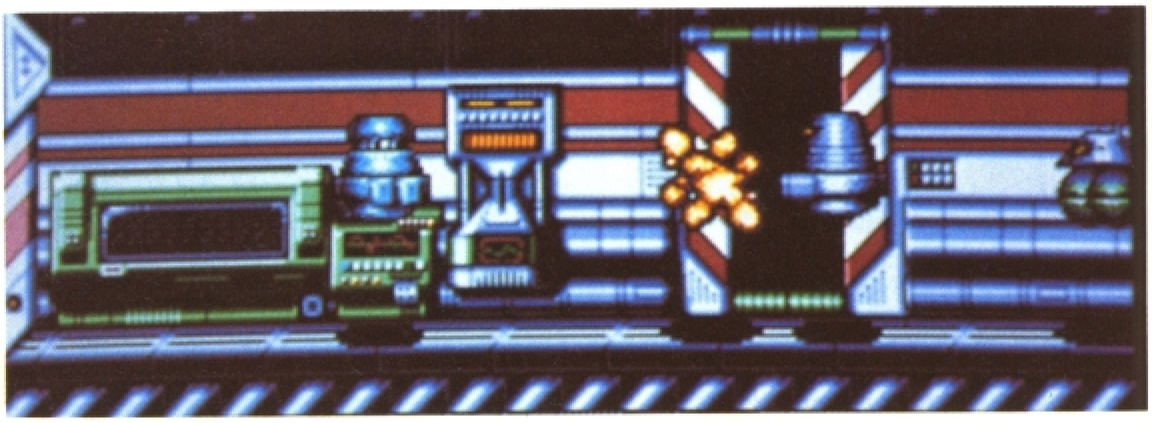
THE SEWER LEVEL 1



THE SEWER LEVEL 2

TEETHING TROUBLES

This section is dedicated to those games that are tougher than average to get into, giving you a little head start on the road to complete fulfillment. This month we're grappling with *Steel* and *Bloodwych*, both deceptively complex. Don't forget, if you've any tips on a toughie to pass on, send them to TEETHING TROUBLES at the usual address - and then the entire universe will be eternally in your debt (or possibly not).



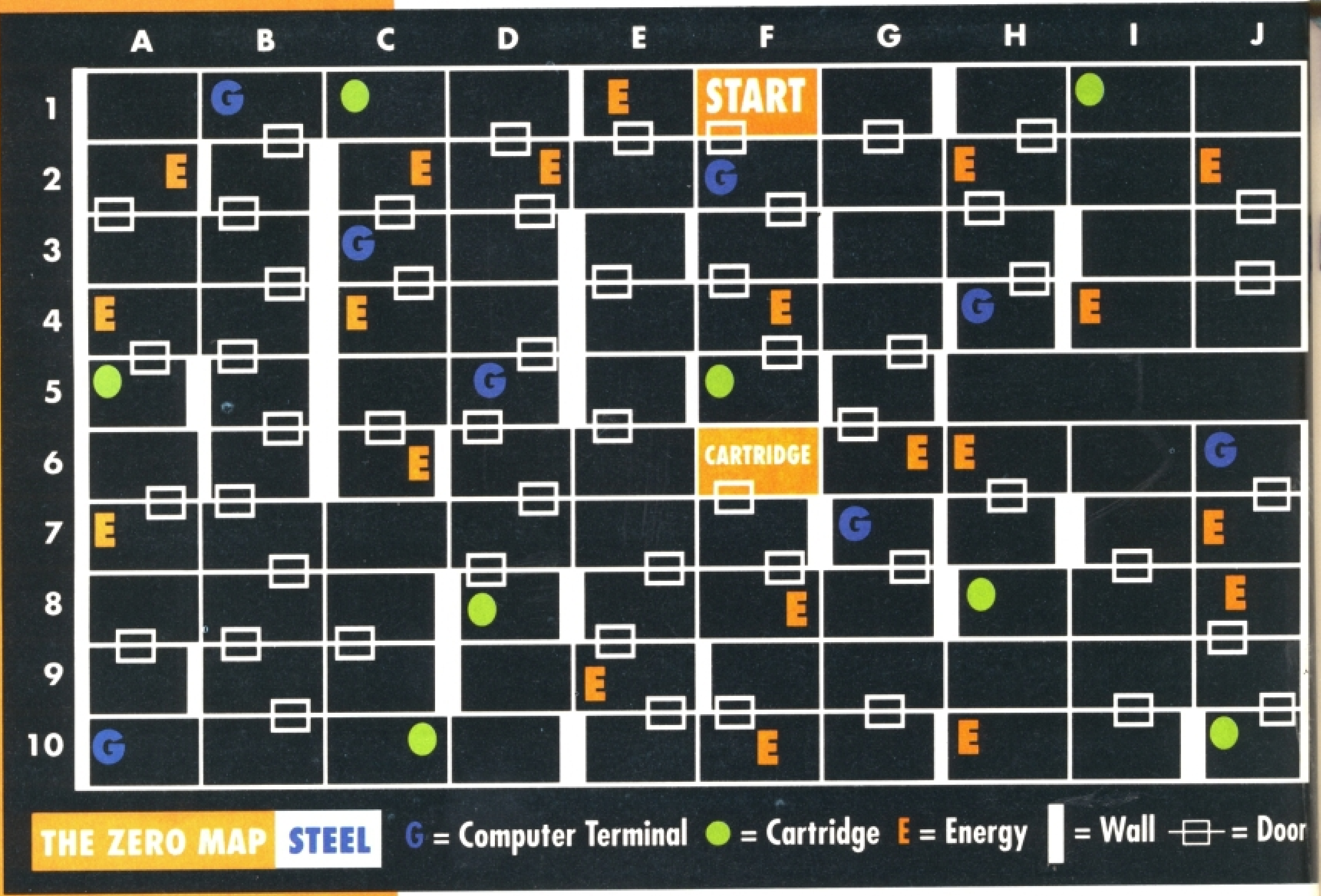
STEEL

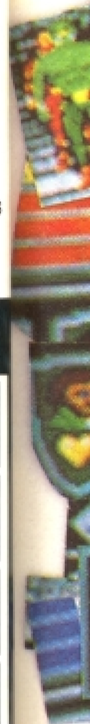
When I reviewed this game I complained that it was a mite too simple, but now I'll have to retract that rather over-ambitious statement. At the time I thought, "Easy-peasy-japaneasy. I'll complete it no hassle." And it seemed no hassle until I'd collected all the cartridges and was about to unjam signal six. Ah. Doing this proved far more difficult than I'd anticipated. Still, using my utterly phantasmagorical games playing skills (hem), I've managed to map it and below, to generously path the way for you to complete it too.

GENERAL TIPS

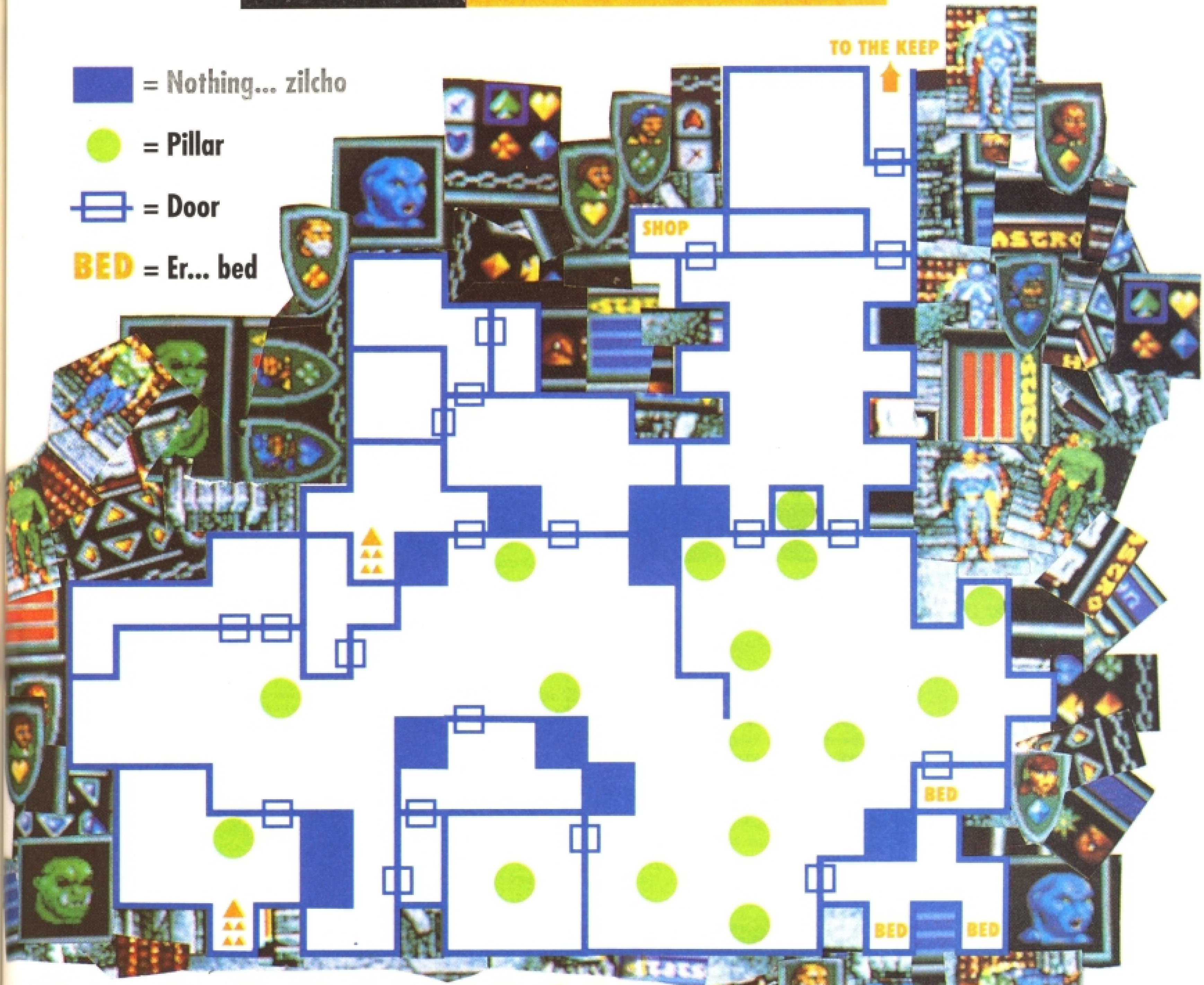
- Keep firing as much as possible.
- Most of the scenery is just decoration, don't spend hours trying to pick it up or shoot it.
- If you fancy a breather then find a room with a wall on one side and stand (or float in this case) at the opposite edge of the screen. No robots will enter.
- After killing a squillion robots don't go, reeking with confidence, to the nearest power-up with the intention of recharging all your energy. If you fill up to 999 you will explode.

The most ideal fill-up stations are at A2 and C6 on the map. They are screens completely enclosed by walls so no androids can force their way in.





THE ZERO MAP BLOODWYCH: THE FIRST HALL



BLOODWYCH

This is a very tough little number, particularly if you've never played *Dungeon Master*. So if you're still standing blubbing at the starting post, like a complete medieval moron, study the map of the First Hall up above, then read on...

GENERAL TIPS

- Use the quick start option. Wandering about recruiting no-hopers to your 'merry' band takes too long if you want to get down to some serious annihilation.
- Cowardice is the better part of valour. Standing up to an assailant is rarely successful, especially if he, she (or it) is a mean bitch-mutha. Make sure you know the layout of the dungeon you're in, and use the old 'dodge as quick as lightning' ploy to avoid your enemy. Alternatively, retreat steadily, firing missiles and spells from a distance, so that he doen't get a chance to gut you.
- Nasties can't open portcullises so use these as a final escape if all is not going well.
- If you have a choice use an offensive spell such as Missile or Terror to chop away some of the reserves of your enemy.
- Characters you try and communicate with are the ones who don't attack you straightaway.
- Always give your fighters the best armour.
- Always have your mage ready with a spell (or three).
- Here are the prices for the shop. Make sure you visit here before entering the keep. DAGGER (5), LEATHER SHIELD (6), SWORDS (10), STAVES (8), LEATHER (7), CHAIN MAIL (12), SHIELD (10). Buy armour first.
- To buy supplies – face the shop keeper, click on PURCHASE and wait for his offer. If he offers something you don't want, click on PURCHASE again. If you want to buy something, put the appropriate amount of cash in the transfer slot and click on OFFER. If the price is right, the item will be exchanged for the money in true Leslie Crowther fashion.

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GET 'DEBRIEFED'

BY 'BINKY' BERKMANN

Helplessly stuck in the middle of a game? Got a tip? Then step into *Marcus 'Binky' Berkmann's* Strategic Air Command Centre for a debriefing session. What ho!

Tally ho and chocks away, it's nearly take-off time again (the wizard crate's fired up and I've got a strafing run over Hamburg on the cards), but first I'll read some of your letters. (*Rrriiip!*)

J. Whiting from **St Albans** wants to know about the 'shop' in *Xenon II*. "What are the last three items you can buy?" he asks. Well, I'll just thumb through the 'classified' drawer in my Strategic Air Command filing cabinet: hold tight. *Plan X Flight-Plan Details... X-Ray Photos Of The Stuka Factory In Berlin...* Aha, here it is: *Xenon II*. Righto – number 18 is the Drone, number 19 is the Flamer and number 20 is so classified I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to reveal its name. Hard luck, old man.

Mark Hammond of **Redhill** has written in with a bally good tip concerning *Stunt Car Racer* from MicroStyle. "A 'suction pad' joystick with a large shaft is better for this game than a tiddly hand-held one." I say, that's a good show. He continues, "When racing on The Drawbridge it's a good idea to stay right on the tail of the computer-controlled car until you're over the moving ramp on the final lap. Then overtake it and go for broke. On the other courses it's best to overtake as soon as possible. Oh, and spending too much time 'in the air' slows you down, so try to keep your tyres on the track. And don't waste your turbo when airborne."

Edward Barret of **Warrington** next, with some tips on *Kick Off*, that spiffing soccer game from Anco. "When in two-player mode, taking the ball straight up the middle of the field from any kick-off, followed by a quick punt just outside the area gets a goal about 80% of the time. In any mode, if the opposition attempts a sliding tackle in their own area, a quick jog over their outstretched legs will result in a penalty for you. When you get one, wait until the arrow is approaching the net's centre, then give the joystick a quick prod. If taking a corner, go for the bottom corner corresponding with the net end (i.e. if the net is to the left of the ball, go for the bottom left hand corner). This will beat the goalie, and leave it for you to stroll one of your men into the ball and score a goal."

Corking good show, you chaps, that's the spirit. Anyone else stuck in a game? Or got a wizard tip? Well, just send them to me, **Wing Commander 'Binky' Berkmann, 14 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1DE**. There's a ZERO t-shirt for anything printed.

Well chums, that's all for this month then. I'm off to Hamburg, and I'm going to leave Johnny Bosch a 'souvenir' he'll not forget for a long time. Where's my flying helmet? Ah, there it is. Tally ho! (*Sound of Spitfire taking off*).



IMPROVE YOUR HEX LIFE!

Blimey! It's that time of the month again, which can only mean one thing – *Jon North's* back to prove the worth of a damn good POKE.

Welcome back to all you wise folk who took the ZERO Challenge last month and discovered what a unique POKEs section this is. You see, we're the only mag to offer you 16-bitters the kind of hacks and POKEs 8-bitters have been used to for years... and what's more, you get a strong dose of hex from us every single bloomin' month.

PAPERBOY (Amiga)

This was one of the first games I hacked when it came out on the Speccy, but it's **Andy The Arfling** (that's what T.A. stands for, apparently) who's cracked it on the Amiga. This one gives infinite lives and papers.

```
10 REM Paperboy hack by Andy
the Arfling
20 FOR C=O: FOR F=521472 TO
521619 STEP 2
30 READ A$: POKEW F,VAL
("&H"+A$)
40 C=C+VAL("&H"+A$): NEXT F
50 IF CALL 558730 THEN END
60 CALL 521546
70 DATA 41 FA,E,23C8,3,B6,4EF9,3,
C,41 FA,E,23C8,4,F1 AO
80 DATA 4EF9,4,F01 C,33FC,5350,
4E71 ,3C68,33FC,4E71,0
90 DATA 3920,33FC,4E71,0,21 7C,
33FC,41 FA,0,3588,6100
100 DATA 3A,4EF9,0,800,2C78,4,
2E3C,3,0,207C,FE,88CO
1 10 DATA 43 FA, FFA4 ,43 E9,
FEBA,303C, 145, 12 D8, 51 C8, FFFC
120 DATA 23FC,2007,4E71,7,F3FC,
4EF9,7,F3D0,323C,10,303C
130 DATA FFFF,33CO,DF,F180,
51C8,FFF8,51C9,FFF0,4E75
140 DATA 5A45,524F,3839
```

FRIGHT NIGHT (Amiga)

One of the strange things I've noticed about hackers is that they all hang out in huge crowds. I saw this routine at September's PC Show when the spokesman for Freestyle UK, one Mr. **Frostbyte** Esq., appeared in the middle of a group of about 15 others. Still, I don't suppose it's for me to judge, simply to write a column... (This gives immortality, by the way.)

```
10 REM Fright Night hack by
Frostbyte
20 C=O: FOR F=768 TO 888 STEP 2
30 READ A$: POKEW F,VAL
("&H"+A$)
40 C=C+VAL(n&H"+A$): NEXT F
50 IF CALL 528590 THEN END
60 CALL 768
70 DATA 33F9,DF,F006,DF,F1 80,839,
6,BF,E001 ,66EC,2C79,0,4
80 DATA 43FA,52,4EAF,FE68,2C40,
41 FA,3C,2208,343C,3ED,4EAE
90 DATA FFE2,2200,243C,6,0,363C,
892,4EAE,FFD6,41 FA,E,23C8
1 00 DATA
6,73E,4EF9,6,24,23FC,4E71
,6000,5,D5EA,4EF9,5,801 4
110 DATA 4446,303A,4652,4947,
4854,0,646F,732E,6C69,6272
120 DATA 61 72,7900,5A45,524F,3839
```

Yikes, I've run out of space again. Sorry it was so short, but perhaps I'll have some more room next month. (*Not a chance. Ed.*) In the meantime, if you've had enough of Freestyle taking all the fame, why not have a go yourself? Send any POKEs you've done (listings are fine, but disks are better) for ST, Amiga or PC to **Jon North, Improve Your Hex Life, ZERO, 14 Rathbone Place, London WIP 1DE.** Send a suitable sae if you want a reply, or your disk back (hint hint).

IDIOT'S GUIDE

Bit of a hacking 'virgin'? Then simply use the handy chat-up lines provided below, and you'll soon have the chicks queuing up. Erm... well, you might be able to POKE your computer, anyway.

AMIGA: Boot up the machine with your Workbench disk, then replace it with the Extras disk when you have the Workbench screen. Load Amiga Basic, slap the listing in (save it if you want), then put the game disk in the drive and RUN it.

ST & PC: There's no point in giving you instructions because there's no POKEs for you this month... sorry!



THE SUN'S BEATING DOWN,
ROCK 'N' ROLL MUSIC'S PLAYING . . .
Beach Volley
BEACH VOLLEY
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DULLARD DEPT.

Got an old rave that you're still stuck on? You shandy drinker, you! Well, as luck would have it, I've delved deep into the past for a few hints and tips on some golden oldies.

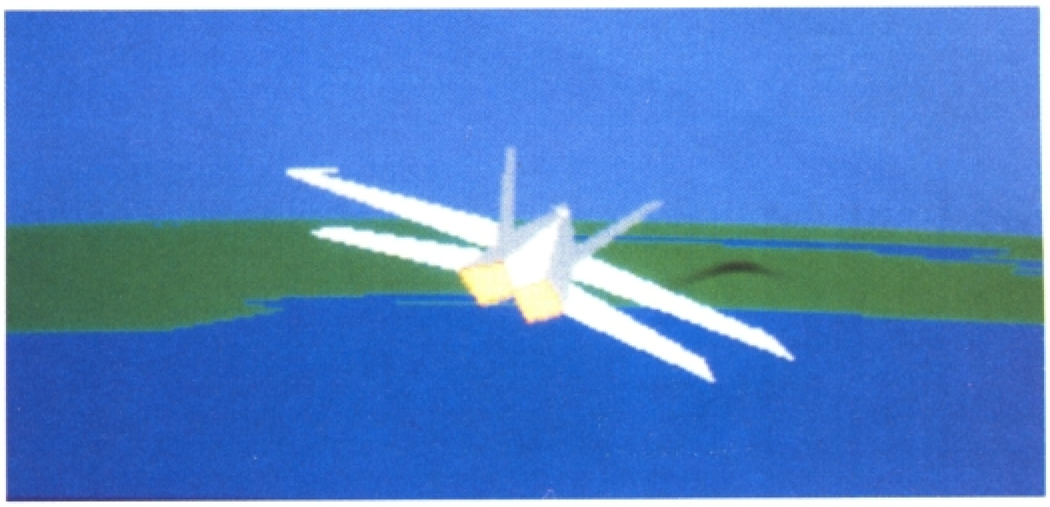
RVF

Fast, furious, fascinating and frenetic – Microsyle's *RVF* is all these 'f' words and several others we can't mention as well. Steven Hill spent a warm weekend snuggled up with it to bring you a few brief tips.

- At the start of a race bring your engine to about 8000 revs, but never exceed 9000. Nudge the joystick carefully to fine tune it.
- Concentrate on the lights. When they hit green just open the throttle and blast off from the starting grid. Cunning weaving and dextrous turning at this point can ensure you a good head start.
- Always practice on the tracks before you race; make a mental note of the bends and the direction they go in. It's always best to go the right way around a corner or else trees and other bits of scenery tend to get in the way.



- Taking those corners like a pro is the most important skill you have to master. A mere shandy-drinker who knew a sharp left-hand bend was coming up would stick to the left like glue, slam on the brakes, and take the corner like gran having a bit of trouble with her Zimmer frame. But to become a well-endowed games-ninja, although you know the corner is going left, you must turn *right* instead. Then, one pico-second before hitting the actual bend, turn left (using none of those pansy gears or woofter brakes); if you time it correctly, you'll make the bend at full speed. And if you don't, um...well, perhaps you'd be better off with a Zimmer frame anyway.



INTERCEPTOR

Many aeons may have passed since it was released, but Electronic Art's *Interceptor* is still one of the best 'plays' around today. And who better to give us some really 'ace' flying tips than those ever-smiling PR people, namely John Roberts, Paul Grace and Lesley Mansford.

WHEN QUALIFYING

Always approach from the south. The other compass directions are wrong and besides, the conning towers tend to get in the way. The easy way to qualify: take off and apply afterburner without banking left or right. Instead just pull straight back until you're flying upside-down. Fly inverted past the carrier for about five miles, then push forward until you're upright, with the carrier in sight. You'll be aligned for a perfect approach and landing. And don't forget to drop your arrester hook.

COMBAT

Never get too close to your enemy. In hard-turning dogfights your plane will lose more speed and altitude, leaving it more vulnerable to faster moving 'bogies'. Try to use the AMRAAMs at maximum range, forcing your target enemy to break, making him an easy hit if your missile fails.

THE MISSIONS

On the rescue mission, you must drop the pack very close to the pilot. The pilot is likely to die of hypothermia if you start faffing about with the MiGs. Fly very slow and low, timing the drop well. As for the sub-mission – this is a killer and no mistake. Fly to the carrier at a height of under 100ft, situated at about 320 degrees from it. You must pump all six missiles into the conning tower of the sub. Each hit will produce a smoke trail. After six shots it's a case of 'hi-ho silver' and you can zip back to the mess for a bit of 'slap and tickle' with the lads in the showers. (*Eh? Ed.*)





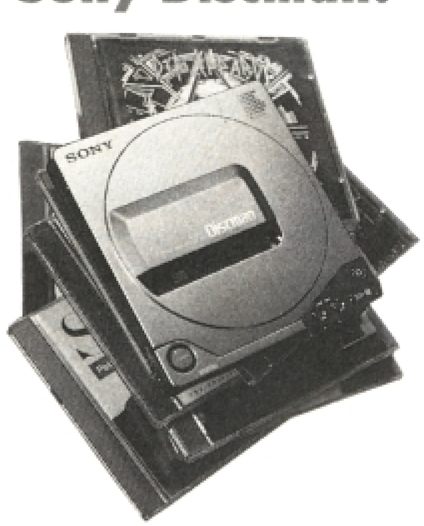
SPOOK!



Ever fancied staying up half the night playing with your ghoulies? Well, now you can 'cos US Gold's spook arcade conversion, *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* is here! Not only that, we've got these pretty spiffo prizes to boogie on down to – a Sony Discman, 10 CDs of your choice and 10 spine-chilling copies of the game.

WIN!

This incredibly hip Sony Discman!



UP FOR G-G-RABS

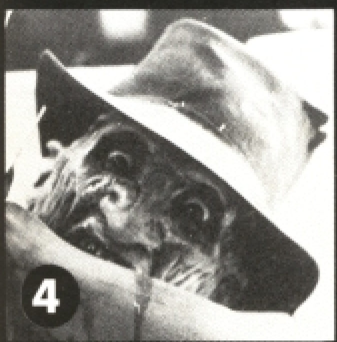
Yus indeed. How does a well cool top of the range Sony D 250 Compact Discman grab you? It's got the lot – random memory search, repeat play, remote control capability and a terrifying retail value of £300!!! But what are you going to play on yer Discman? Well, we're also giving away 10 single album chart CD's of your choice!!!

And as if that isn't enough, the 10 runners-up will be getting copies of the blood-curdling *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* (Eeeek!). Reckon you don't stand a ghost of a chance? Wrong.











WHAT TO DOOOO! (Woooooo!)

The above five pictures are all of famous horror merchants. All you have to do is match the correct picture number with the correct film or TV programme on the coupon. So if you think that No. 2 looks remarkably like Elvira (easily mistaken) then you put the number '2' next to *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark*. And so on... but beware – you should have one film or TV title left over.

Once you've filled in the coupon, boil it up in a cauldron with a dead cat, two frogs and your pet gerbil. (You won't win but the RSPCA wil be down on you like a ton of bricks!) On the other hand – if you do want to win, then send your entries to Ghoulies Competition, ZERO, 14 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1DE. Don't worry about listing the CDs you want – we'll get back to you for that. Oh, and remember to answer the tie-breaker 'cos we're expecting an avalanche of entries!

GHOULS RULES

•No employee of Dennis Oneshots or US Gold is allowed to enter, 'cos if they do they'll have to spend a night in a graveyard with Peter Cushing.
•No entries received after first post on December 31st will be considered.
•The Editor's decision is final, and anyone arguing will get a kick in the (*That's enough ghoulie jokes. Ed.*)

Frankenstein is No...1..
Dracula is No...3..
Elvira, Mistress Of The Dark is No.....
The Munsters is No...5..
Nightmare On Elm Street is No...4..
Spitting Image is No...2..

TIE BREAK: What's the name of Herman Munster's spanking niece?

Name ____________________

Address ____________________

____

____________ **Postcode** ____________



FUTURE WARS

A man's gotta to what a man's gotta do, particularly when an anti-social load of aliens are threatening to wipe out the entire human race. *David McCandless* is, er... a man, and got straight down to it when he tried to save the world in Palace's latest arcade adventure *Future Wars*.

Time travelling and the future seem to be in 'vogue' with computer games these days. In *Future Wars*, obnoxious aliens want to live on Earth. They don't mean to live in the quiet suburban way, inviting their human neighbours for a quick natter and a cup of tea. No – they mean to annihilate every homo sapien, burn every vestige of mankind from the surface of the planet and extinguish every... *(We get the message. Ed.).*

Luckily, old Ronald 'The Robot' Reagan did have a use after all. His SDI system still exists in the future, and that's precisely what thwarts the aliens. So the extra-terrestials take the obvious course of action – they go back in time and plant bombs at crucial points in the Earth's history, hoping to nip mankind in the 'bud' (as it were).

The game starts with you, a jolly window cleaner, merrily, er, cleaning windows on a massive metropolitan façade. Your boss pokes his grizzly head out of one window, and gives you a fair old blasting for no apparent reason. Slightly peeved by this, you decide to zip back and forth in time to become the sole saviour of the planet (as one does in these situations).

Mouse skills are essential when you want to move your character about the screen – clicking on the required destination makes happy-go-lucky you wander across the screen. If any objects (like chairs, tables, dead bodies etc) block the way then you simply have to rapidly click around the object and your man will follow the route.

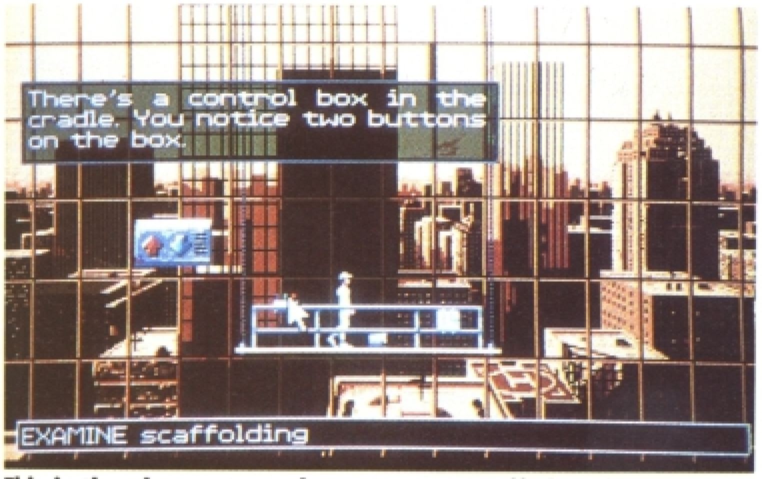
The right-hand mouse button is the key to the interaction/adventure element. It activates a menu which holds a variety of commands, allowing you to manipulate objects (Examine, Take, Inventory, Go to the toilet etc). This is when your keen eye comes in. More often than not, important items like locked cupboards are hidden in out of the way places.

The Examine command allows you to, er, examine these things. If the object is important a 'blow-up' will appear in the corner of the screen for you to scrutinize in more detail. The Use command deals with things you have in your hand, whereas Operate is concerned with doors, handles, buttons and all those fiddly things. Speak is a bit of a one-sided command, since it doesn't allow you to specify what's to be said. Instead yor man just blurts out whatever he feels to be appropriate (usually an insult).

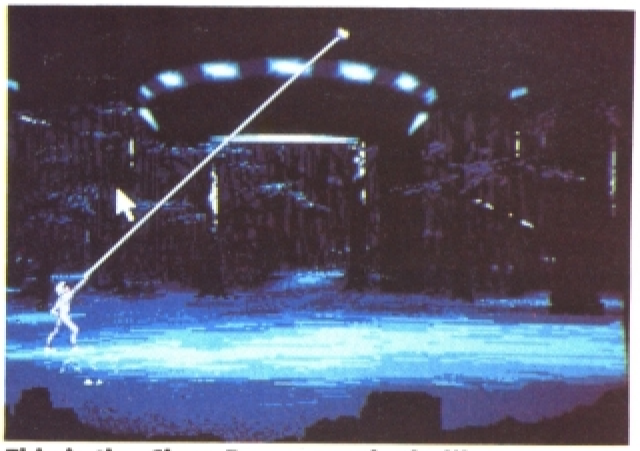


Now it's over to a great hall where you'll meet Torin, Lord of the Province. He'll have some handy tips.

Characters wander in and out of the game. Most say things, either prompting you or talking around you (a quick 'eaves-drop' is probably in order here for gleaning extra information). Extra fun can be had in the arcade interludes, where quick reflexes play a hand. There's one sequence where you have to be incredibly swift indeed to type in a code – or pop your cork.



This is the skyscraper where you start off cleaning windows only to be insulted by your boss.



This is the *Close Encounters* lookalike opening scene where a giant UFO swoops down and has to weather attacks from us mere humanoids.

It's the graphics that make *Future Wars* brilliant, with an incredible amount of attention being paid to detail, colour and realism. For instance, most screens are brought to life with a small piece of animation (chimney smoke, birds in the distance, pecking hens).The different screens blend well, and each time zone is characterised by its own style, graphics and colours.

The problems and puzzles are hard. and I can see non-purists becoming easily frustrated with this game, where a few pixels can mean the difference between success or failure.

The look and gameplay of *Future Wars* owes a lot to the Sierra On-Line style of arcade adventure. But, where the Sierra games are simple and quite accessible, *Future Wars* is complex and hard to get into – but does have an atmosphere that's lacking in the other games.

HASSLE FACTOR: 1
Maybe a little too hard for beginners. Something for hardened arcade adventurers to bite into.

I'd say curiosity is probably the main motivating force when playing this game – curiosity about the later screens, curiosity about the solutions to the problems and curiosity about what the objects do... Brilliant.

GRAPHICS 94	ADDICTIVENESS 86	OVERALL 90
SOUND 85	EXECUTION 87	

WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	Future Wars
PUBLISHER	Palace/Delphine
PRICE	£24.95
FORMAT	ST/Amiga
RELEASED	Out now

MANIAC MANSION

Lucasfilm/ST, Amiga & PC/£24.99

Mike: What's going on? The evil Dr Fred has kidnapped Sandy and is threatening to remove her brains? One glimpse of her pert pixelations and I could think of better things to remove... *(Wash your mouth out with Listerine, Gerrard! Ed.)* Time to round up your buddies and break into his maniacal mansion, the one with the chainsaw in the kitchen and a purple slime geek on the loose. Yep, sounds like my kinda game!

Hero of the hour is Dave, Sandy's boyfriend.You have to choose two chums to go in there with him and save the scintillating Sandy. But who? Razor, lead singer with Razor and the Scummettes? Or maybe Jeff the surfer dude, who hangs out around the beach. Let's hope the police don't catch him at it.

Maniac Mansion is a Lucasfilm game, in the vein of *Zak McKracken*, and owes a lot to the Sierra On-Line style. But it's a lot better executed than Sierra games, with speedy sprites and good use of your micro's memory to store screens, rather than loading them from disk every time.

Inside the house your three characters can split up. Choose the New Kid option from the list at the foot of the screen and you can switch from one to another. All your choices are listed for you and you flick around them with the cursor, so there's no typed input at all (or 'at all, at all' for our Irish readers!)



"We've got just enough time for a spook tango..." Dave doesn't seem to be taking things seriously...

Choose from the likes of Pick Up, Open, Turn On, Use etc. A great inclusion is the What Is option which lets you move the pointer all over the place and tells you what all the objects are. Hidden around are various goodies... and some not-so-goodies, like the ketchup dripping from the fridge.

Meanwhile Jeff's been dumped in a dungeon and brave Dave has discovered a nuclear reactor in the basement, and a pool of radioactive slime. Yuk. Assorted locked doors are scattered about, some of them yield to hidden keys, others need a push here and there. But how do you get the radio from the middle of the swimming pool, when none of the wimps will go in after it? Where's Jeff, the surfer king? He should be able to... rats, he's been chucked in the cellar with nowt but a skeleton for company. Crikey. So where's Razor? She's talking to Chuck the plant in the library. And as for Dave – why are you fiddling with that keypad which says Danger on it? You know if you press the wrong code the whole house is liable to... KABOOOOMMM!!!

New game? Yes, please. This ain't half bad, slime lovers and you won't see such an oddball set of characters again!

ST Score – Amiga and PC out now

GRAPHICS	75	ADDICTIVENESS	85	OVERALL 75
SOUND	30	EXECUTION	90	

KNIGHT FORCE

Titus/ST, Amiga & PC/£24.99

Paul: One look at *Knight Force* sent me a quiverin' in my chain mail. (*Yuk. Ed.*) Oh goody goody, I'm going to enjoy this, I thought. Three years on I was still trying to load it... but more of that later.

Set on Earth thousands of years ago, the Knight of Thunder's quest is to rescue the beautiful Princess Tanya, and save the kingdom of Belloth along the way. To do so, he must pursue the evil Red Sabbath across five different lands and assorted ages (shades of *Highlander* here, methinks). Timescales range from Prehistoric right up to the future. No sooner have you finished exchanging blows with a Cro-Magnon man (whose sense of fair play is as dodgy as his taste in fur coats) than you find yourself in Royal France. There you are standing outside the beautiful palace of Versailles being clubbed on the head by a Paris street urchin. The graphics complement the settings well whilst the backdrops and figures are also top hole.

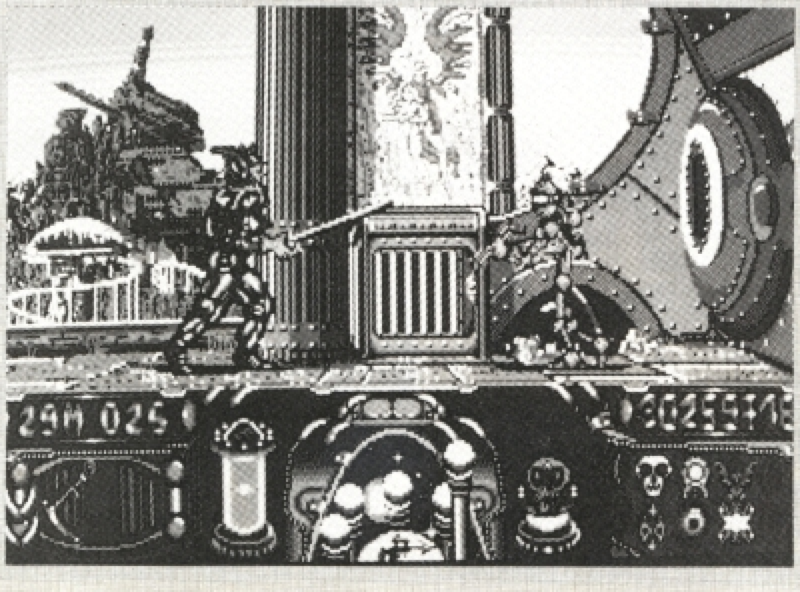
That's the good news – now lets start the hatchet job. The delay between the Knight leaving the side of a frame and the picture catching up, leaves him with plenty of time to plummet over a cliff or roast his chestnuts in a caveman's fire.

But that's a minor problem compared to loading the game... First put in a disk – the one marked '1' seems like a good bet doesn't it? Good, that's OK. Now what does it say on the screen? Ah yes, 'Load Other Disk Then Press Space Bar To Continue.' Easy. Ooops! I've fallen into a river. Oh dear, I appear to be dead. A real case of Game Over. What's this? "Load Other Disk Then Press Space Bar To Continue." Ho hum, here we go again.

After repeating this routine a few times, this reviewer was fast doing his nut. Then I completed a level. At least I seemed to have done, everything was dead but I wasn't getting anywhere fast. Let's go back the way we came. What's this? 'Load Other...' I think you can guess the rest. So I loaded another disk. Did I get to another level, did I get lots of bonus points for being a hero, and a pretty good looking one at that? No I didn't. What I got was a Game Over followed by a you know what.

As you may have guessed, I got pretty frustrated by this little number. It sounded such a good game – perhaps it was, but I'm afraid I never got a chance to find out. Nice looking game, shame about the hassle.

You travel 5,000 years into the future and who's the first person you meet? Bloomin' Twiggy!



PC Score – ST and Amiga out now

GRAPHICS	83	ADDICTIVENESS	72	OVERALL 68
SOUND	70	EXECUTION	52	


DARE YOU GO
BEYOND
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BLACK HOLE
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BATMAN

It's here – the Amiga version of Ocean's stunner has emerged from the Batcave! *Sean Kelly* threw on his batcape and cut through the bat-hype with his batarang to bring you the *Batman* review all you Amigans have been waiting for...



Oh would you like to swing on a batrope, carry moonbeams around in a jar. *(Eh? Ed)*

Right, no faffing about with a really predictable 'Holy something or other' start – let's just launch straight into the gullet of Ocean's latest little number, squidge about in the giblets a bit, and pass a verdict as we emerge, refreshed, at the other end. *(Not sure I like the sound of this one. Ed.)*

The first section is set in the Axis Chemical Plant, and to secure victory the ol' guano maker must use the batrope to work his way up and down the levels of the factory. Along the way Jack Napier's henchmen must be disposed of – the most effective method being the batarang in the belly. (Heuch!) Victory in the final confrontation on this level will result in Jack being dumped in a mixture of Ol' Dogturd's Original Pale Ale, Sellafield sludge and mineral water – an experience which will result in his becoming The Joker. (Wooooooh!)

In the next section Batman jumps in his trusty batmobile and makes good his escape from The Joker through the streets of Gotham, avoiding both police roadblocks and the smiling one's minions *Outrun* style. Corners are negotiated by a timely chuck of the grapnel hook to twang round using lamp posts. The middle section will find you back in the batcave attempting to isolate three substances which have been impregnated with The Joker's lethal smilex chemical. Yikes!

For the penultimate section it's back to the mean streets of Gotham City, this time flying in the Batwing. Balloons have been filled with smilex gas (boo!) by The Joker (hiss!) and you must fly the Batwing through the mooring ropes of the balloons, causing them to float harmlessly away (hurrah!).

And finally Cyril... and finally Esther, it's the big showdown with The Joker, set against the backdrop of the Gotham City Cathedral. Similar to the first section, this time crumbling floors and vicious rats must be avoided before an even more final confrontation with The Joker on the roof of the cathredral. So that's that. Did Ocean belt out a pile of guano, or did the wily ol' dogs have an eye on the licence for *Batman II* and hence produce a decent game?

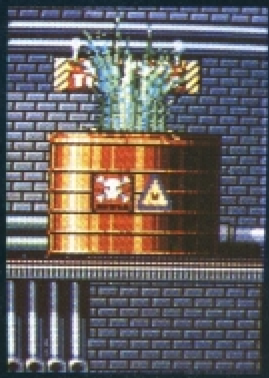
Batman is, fortunately, an excellent game. The first and fifth sections are excellent examples of how to produce a brilliant arcade adventure, whilst the driving and flying sequences are almost games in their own right. Where most games attempting to pack in several sections tend to leave out playability in order to squeeze all the code in, *Batman* doesn't, and manages to be both fantastically addictive and slickly programmed.

Each section is colourfully designed and it's obvious that someone has taken a lot of pride in getting the details just right. All the figures are well animated - watching our hero chuck out the batrope and climb it, is still visually satisfying several hours into playing the game. Similarly the gloomy, brooding streets of Gotham City are well portrayed in the driving and flying sequences. Sound comes courtesy of a neat little tune and the usual thuddy noises and sampled gunshots.

There's a bit of time wasted in pointless disk accessing, but this doesn't affect the playability of the actual game, though, and this is where *Batman* is outstanding. A well thought out adaptation of the movie, and brilliantly programmed to boot. Every batfan should have a copy. Actually, everybody with an Amiga should have one. Go and invest in a copy this instant or the jokers on you.



A batarang up the bot sends Jack Napier heading for an early bath...



SPLAAASH!!! Come on in – the Ol' Dogturd's love-e-lee!

HASSLE FACTOR: 1
A chunk of pointless picture loading happens each time a game ends. Annoying.



What kind of idiot would stick a building next to a landing strip? That's what I want to know.

WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	Batman The Movie
PUBLISHER	Ocean Software
PRICE	£24.99
FORMAT	Amiga (ST to follow)
RELEASED	Out Now!

GRAPHICS	93
ADDICTIVENESS	88
SOUND	76
EXECUTION	86
OVERALL	86

SCAPEGHOST

Level 9/ST, Amiga & PC/£19.95

Mike: In most games you end up dead but in *Scapeghost* you start off that way, actually standing next to your own grave, watching your own funeral. Yikes!... it's enough to give you the creeps. Level 9's latest is also the last in the line of their traditional text 'n' piccies style games.

You play the part of Alan Chance (the late Alan Chance). In fact – and I'll get this one over with – you're a ghost of a chance! The wreath on your grave says: "For Alan Chance, a much loved man and long-serving police officer, murdered in the line of duty. His family and friends shall miss him dearly." Um, that's nice to know. But cock your ghostly lug-hole in the direction of the



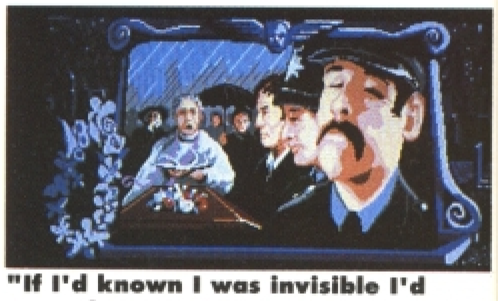
You're a blinking stiffy.

detective standing round your grave and you'll find that some of your so-called 'friends' are very glad you've popped your clogs.

The fact that no one knows you're eavesdropping is the advantage of being a ghost, along with the fact that you can get in to see Cambridge United for free! (*Who? Ed.*) The bad news though, is that you can't pick anything up – everything just slips through your fingers. But if you're particularly light-fingered, you might get the hang of it.

It's a great idea for a game and no gravestone is left unturned in the search for a merry jest... a tomb with a view, spirit levels – they're all there! I like the one about the ghost in the next grave to you. He's called Joe Danby and used to be the landlord of the Pig and Whistle, but can't go back to haunt it 'cos they don't serve spirits. Laugh? I nearly died! Joe takes you on a tour of the cemetery where you must meet the other inhabitants – a cheery lot of ghosts and ghouls. The first part mainly has you helping out these creatures as you struggle to clear your name and the mystery surrounding your own death.

The puzzles are all nicely done,



"If I'd known I was invisible I'd never have put on this stupid French detective disguise!"

though with some of them there's a feeling that you've been there before (*he means déjà vu. Ed.*) in earlier games like *Knight Orc* and *Gnome Ranger*. It could all have done with a lot more play-testing too.

Part two gets you out of the graveyard into a gloomy house whilst part three begins with a priest about to sprinkle your grave with holy water. The graphics are great, though so far I've only seen the ST version. The others will have to wait 'cos the editor's screaming at me for this review. At least I think it was the editor... hang on while I look round... Aaarrrgh!!

What a shame Level 9 are bowing out of text 'n' piccies style adventures with this good, but not brilliant game.

ST Score – PC and Amiga out now

GRAPHICS 85 | ADDICTIVENESS 80 | SOUND 0 | EXECUTION 65 | OVERALL 78

DAY OF THE PHARAOH

Rainbow Arts/ST, Amiga & PC/£24.99

Sean: Now forgive me if I'm wrong, but the scenario for *Pharaoh* is probably the first to ever borrow a story from The Bible. Try and guess where this story was blagged from – Seth, King of the Desert and God of Evil, is planning a coup d'état, and so when the Pharaoh pops his papyrus, he decides to top all the possible ascendants to the throne by drowning them. Fortunately, a good God decides to save one sprog from drowning, and takes him to the Egyptians who dwell on the bank of the Nile, where the young prince is brought up as a peasant... well here's a clue – it's not the story of Noah.

Anyway, the sprog who has been saved, by some amazing coincidence, is you. You are granted a bit of cash and a boat, and given the task of rising through the social ranks until you've proved yourself worthy of the Pharaoh's throne. You do this by travelling up and down the Nile, trading at the various towns on the riverbank, and by using your cash to build monuments to various gods and, of course, yourself. I'm aware that it takes all kinds to make a world, but I must admit that at the moment, I'm having trouble thinking of anyone who might enjoy this arcade strategy trading game more than any other. It's simplistic, rudimentary and boring, to say the least. Indeed, as any Egyptian trader will tell you, a life based solely on trading is fairly boring, and he'd pack in his job and become a pyramid designer if it weren't for the arcade sections. Ah, yes. What's the point in bringing out a trading game if it isn't spiced up with pretty graphics and hasn't the odd arcade section thrown in? Unfortunately, that's what they are. Odd and thrown in.



Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, if I crash again I'll scream.

There are three major arcade – and I use the word very loosely – sections in *Pharaoh*. One is a daft affair where you attempt to stop people boarding your ship by giving them a quick slap across the head with a paddle. Another involves throwing arrows at attacking (stationary) enemies while you pootle along on your chariot. There's also a section in which you guide your ship through rocky waters by moving the joystick left and right. All are lacking totally when it comes to gameplay and fun, and a simple joystick error can end two hours worth of empire building on two of these sections. 'Frustrated' does not accurately describe the seething mass I turned into, whenever this happened.

In addition to boring gameplay on all fronts, *Day of the Pharaoh* wins my vote for this year's prize as the most unfriendly disk juggler. Sometimes you even have to swap disks to learn you've been killed. It's a pity that what could have been a fine game has been ruined by sloppy design and a lack of thought.

Amiga score – ST and PC out now

GRAPHICS 80 | ADDICTIVENESS 53 | SOUND 70 | EXECUTION 40 | OVERALL 58

ADVENTURES



The Bearded Wonder of Adventure-land is back! Yes, *Mike Gerrard* spills the beans from the depths of hippy Huntingdon on what he's been up to (adventure-wise of course!) during the last month.

While I was checking out the Infocom info this month and feeling despondent ('cos due to wretched company take-overs the regular flow of adventures that I love – the truly Interactive Fiction type – may cease), I perked up considerably when I realised that there are still dozens of Infocom games that I've never really even got my teeth into. Yay, I thought, let's get one of those golden oldies out and give it another bash.

Beyond Zork was actually released yonks ago and when it first appeared I was so rushed off my feet (*That's a feeble excuse. Ed.*) that I didn't get much time to play it. So, the other day I decided to "Stuff work" and get the game out again.

First thoughts? A reminder that this was the first Infocom game to have any type of graphics at all, even if it was just the loading screen. Little did we know what that would lead to!

Wink, wink, nod, nod...

Next thought came as I read the introductory screen's text. (Newcomers note that 'text' means loadsawords on the screen). Anyway, I read the intro, which had superb Infocom-type lines like 'The coconut is our only hope' and 'The shrill voice of a newt rose above the cheering.' 'Blimey!', I thought, completely enraptured, 'There's a whole game 'ere!' Even typing 'I' for Inventory produced: 'You have one Zorkmid'. A financial nymph appears on your keyboard: 'By the way, you can check the amount of cash you're holding at any time with the Cash command or just type '$' followed by RETURN. Bye!' And she disappeared with a wink.

Right, I thought, how can you possibly get all that on an icon? And how can an icon compete with the simple remarks that happen to tickle my fancy, like entering a room and discovering that 'There's a giant onion here'? On examining the onion you learn that 'This onion is twice the diameter of the Frobozz Magic Beachball Company beach-ball!' I don't know about you but I revel in all that kind of stuff. Even being bitten on the ankle by a rat-ant as you go down into the cellar. If you try to attack the rat-ant with your shillelagh, each response from the program is slightly different, though somehow you always just manage to miss the creature!



This, fellow adventurers, was history in the making – Infocom's first ever game to have graphics... even if it was just the loading screen!

And lo and behold then it happened. I went north from the cellar in Ye Rusty Lantern public house, and forgot to light the rusty lantern before I moved. The result? Why naturally I was in imminent danger of being eaten by a grue! Eeek! Luckily, I survived that time, but it did make me wonder whether graphics based games will mean that someone, somewhere is going to make the fatal mistake of trying to depict a grue. Even *The Lore And Legends Of Quendor* booklet that comes with *Beyond Zork* doesn't make that mistake. On the very first page, beneath the drawing depicting a few human remains, we read that 'No grue has ever been seen by the light of day: few have survived its fearsome jaws to tell the tale.'

Phew, Phew, Barney McGrue

And long may that be the case. A graphical grue? No way, José. There are some things, I'm sure you'll agree, that only words can do – and thank goodness for the Infocom back catalogue. Now what should I do with the fishcake?

As the ZERO editor is so strict (Ooooh, I like it really!) and insists that writers write their writings (*Cut the alliteration. Ed.*) about three years before deadline, I'm forced upon pain of death to write this second issue before the first one's even out! So the flood of letters that'll no doubt swamp this page in the future... well, they er, haven't arrived yet. This can only mean one thing – I'll have to write it myself! Drat and triple drat!

So this month I'm gonna give all you adroit adventurers an Infocom exclusive, revealing its case history, latest news and titbits.

Infocom... Infogo...

The adventure world was once a reliable place. You could, for instance, rely on Infocom to release about four sparkling games a year like *Bureaucracy, Trinity, Leather Goddesses, Lurking Horror, Stationfall* and so on... At least a dozen ace games were released from '86-'88, and that's not counting the brilliant earlier classics like *Zork, Deadline, Hitchhiker's, Planetfall* and *Suspended.*

But then things started to change. Quality seemed to suffer a tad. Some thought *Plundered Hearts* was scraping the bottom of the barrel, that *Border Zone* was teetering on the average, and others simply couldn't fathom *Nord And Bert Couldn't Make Head Nor Tail Of It.*

There was also doubt about which machines were being supported. Amstrad owners found that *Lurking Horror* and *Stationfall* were the last two games to be made available for their machine, and then Atari ST users had the screaming ab dabs when *Sherlock Holmes And The Crown Jewels* failed to appear in their format. It was withdrawn soon after on the ST and though some have been promised, will they actually appear?

In the midst of all this, the company was taken over by Mediagenic/Activision due to financial difficulties. I reckon that if you're producing award-winning games selling by the hundred thousand, (*Hitchiker's, Zork* and *Leather Goddesses Of Phobos* certainly did for one) and not making any dosh, then there's been a cock-up by management. In 1987 and 1988 there was also the rather weird idea of the Infocomics series of... well, what were they? Games? Comics? Every Infocom fan I knew sussed they were doomed to failure as soon as they heard about them. A pity Infocom didn't realise it too. So they died a death.

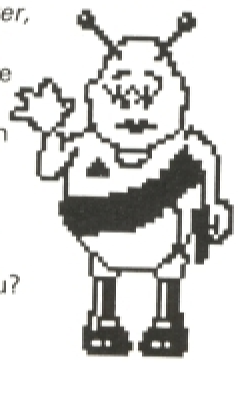
Did Infocom lose its way in about 1987, when releases like *Plundered Hearts* and *Nord And Bert* showed they were looking round for different ideas? Adventure players like me would have been quite happy to carry on playing new Infocom games till the cows came home but it seems that they had to turn their hand to something new – quick.

Leather Goddesses of Phobos

Amongst all the wranglings and uncertainties, late in 1988 the Infocom President and long standing member of the team, Joel Berez, resigned. Followed by the closure of the Infocom offices in Cambridge, Massachusetts. To find out the latest hot gossip, I spoke to Activision in England, though even they're not always 100 per cent tuned into what's happening in America.

They were kind enough to disclose that management had moved into Mediagenic offices, and are hoping, that the programmers who were left behind will continue to produce the same sort of super stuff for Infocom.

Infocom's main problem was probably over-staffing but let's keep our fingers crossed that they get themselves sorted soon. Do not despair 'cos there's a glimmer of hope regarding rumours that some renowned Infocom names are actually setting up their own company! On the other hand, this was actually one of the rumours that Activision refused to confirm or deny. Maybe we'll see an adventure company centred around the likes of Dave Lebling and Steve Meretsky. Between the two of them they've produced *Lurking Horror, Planetfall, Sorcerer, A Mind Forever Voyaging, Leather Goddesses of Phobos, Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Shogun, Zork, Enchanter, Suspect, Spellbreaker* and *Stationfall.* I for one would like to see more Inter-active Fiction from the guys who did all those graphics-dominated, rather than icon-based, RPG-type games. What about you?



MY PLAY LIST

This is where I keep my side of the bargain and let you know all about my adventures – the ones I've been grappling with over the last month!

DOMES OF SHA

River Software has been running successfully for a few years now, with a stream of 8-bit releases and a flow of good reviews. Yes, you can really bank on a River Software adventure but can they bridge the gap between 8-bit and 16-bit? And can I think of any more river-type puns? *(Hopefully not. Ed).* I'll just get on and look at their current (whoops!) release.

If you've had an 8-bit machine you're probably already familiar with some of River's releases like *Mutant, Hammer Of Grimmold* and *The Domes Of Sha.* Well blow me down with Hurricaine Hilda if those very same three titles haven't been converted to the ST by author Jack Lockerby using Incentive's STAC and published on one disk at under a tenner. It gets full marks for value from me! They're all text-only so there's no attempt to use STAC and the ST's extra memory to jazz them up with some pictures. No fancy packaging either, unless you rate a jiffy bag. As there's no room to review all three, I thought I'd look in detail at the most recent, *Domes Of Sha* which I liked in its Spectrum incarnation, giving it 80 in the mega-wonderful *Your Sinclair* adventure pages.

Domes is set on the planet of Olaxas which is where the Sha tribe live in their own little valley. All around them the planet is dying, but can they quit their valley to go in search of better prospects? Can they heckers. The Cold Fear stops them. Till now, of course. Enter one brave (i.e. too dumb to know better) adventurer. You find an ancient scroll early on, and although it's written in a long forgotten language, the programmer kindly provides a translation. The gist of this is to get in there and lead the people out of the valley. But first you have to find the village elder. (*What's wrong with a sycamore? Ed*). No, not that kind of elder but the oldest and wisest chap in town. He's certainly got his head screwed on, 'cos he's staying put and letting you sort out the problems!



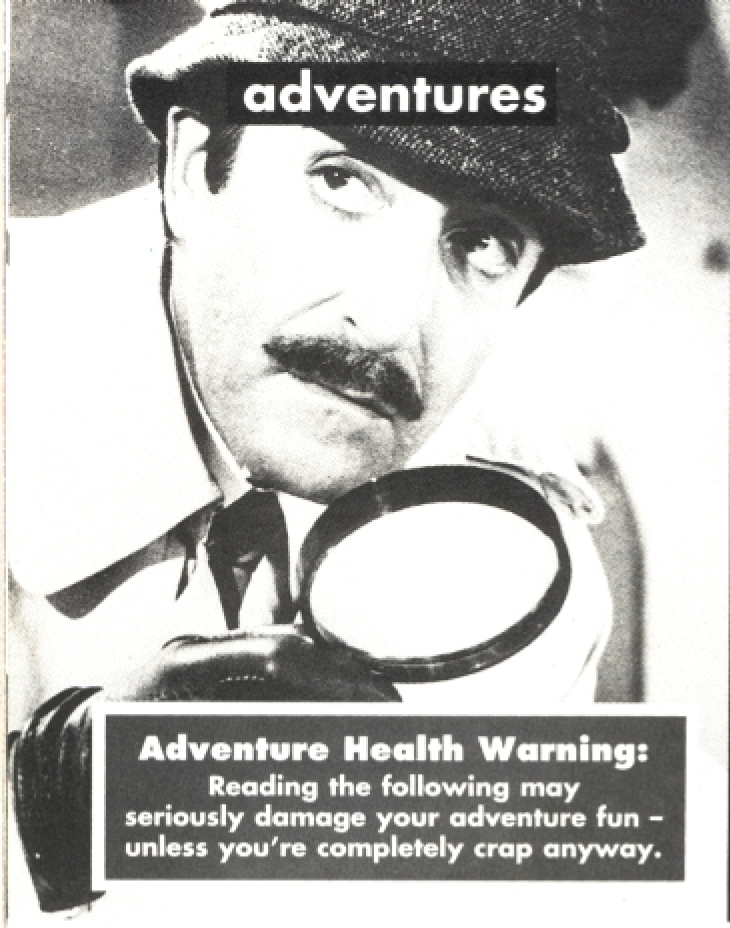
The problems are good. Right from the start they've got you puzzling, and the size of the game (each one's nigh-on 90K) means there's plenty of them. Like how to get the Sunowl's egg down from the tree when mummy bird attacks you if you take it? How to get the black object resting on thin ice on Lake Sha? Beneath the valley there's a large underground cave network, a bit like *Colossal Caves.* There's a beam in there which comes in very handy, so don't break it – so far I've used it in three different problems and I've a feeling I might be needing it again. If you get stuck you can always type HELP – that gives you the phone number and address of River Software!

So far so good. The bad news is that this has been a pretty hasty conversion job: missing comas, typing mistakes (e.g. southest for south-east), the Sunowl suddenly becomes Sun Owl, that kind of thing. Nothing drastic but still sloppy. There's also a little bug. If you enter a multiple movement command (like SOUTH, WEST, NORTH) in one input, then the status line at the top and the screen description underneath disagree with each other. Typing LOOK gets them to agree.

Despite the increase in size, I don't think these games convert well to the ST (only available on ST at the moment) – why buy a 16-bit machine to play 8-bit adventures on? And that's what it felt like. If you've played them on the Spectrum or Commodore you won't want to play them again, and if you're used to 16-bit adventures you may be disappointed by the simple presentation and little mistakes. But they do only cost about three quid each, so recommended for the paupers among us!

WHAT'S WHAT

TITLE	Domes of Sha/Mutant/ Hammer of Grimmold
PUBLISHER	River Software
ADDRESS	44 Hyde Place, Aylesham, Kent.
PRICE	£9.95
FORMAT	ST only



Adventure Health Warning:
Reading the following may seriously damage your adventure fun – unless you're completely crap anyway.

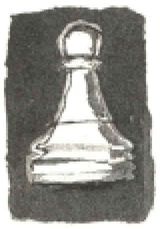
CLUES-EAU

Well here's the page where I (alias Inspector Clues-eau) willbe giving you what you want – no, not *that*, or free fivers but loads of hints and tips on all the best 16-bit games. Maybe even a full solution now and then. There'll be hints from my archives, or if you've got solutions or tips you think might interest other readers, send 'em in.

Now it's hard to know the best way to go about handing out hints – do you give the full answer? Do you write it backwards or upside down? Do you put the answers in code or give a hint that's so subtle every clothead in the land will write in and say "Er, I didn't understand that... what does 'subtle' mean?" I've decided to say "To hell with it" and just print the answers to the problems straight. So if you don't want to know the answers, it's quite simple, just don't read the questions. And if you think the system needs changing, write and let me know. I'm one writer who actually listens to his readers.

To launch the page on its way, here's a Special devoted to the adventures of one company who've done a lot for the 16-bit scene, Magnetic Scrolls. Just in case you hate me giving the answers away like this, I've concentrated on the early stages of each game.

THE PAWN



Getting Started:
Go east, say "Hello" to Kronos, listen to what he says and then say to him "What is the wristband?"

What To Do In The Palace Gardens:
Look in the fountains and under the mat. Examine the bushes. Use the metal key fron your jeans to get into the shed, and look under and on the workbench.

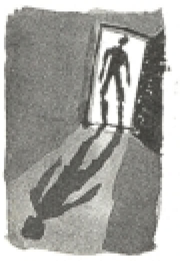
How To Stop The Guru Laughing At You:
Hide the wristband with your shirt.

How To Get Past The Boulder:
Use your shirt to tie the hoe and rake (from the shed) together, and lever the boulder.

How To Get The Guru What He Wants:
Melt the snow to produce the water.

To Lift The Floorboards:
Close the door behind you.

JINXTER



What To Do With The Plastic Dragon:
You can play with it in the bath but otherwise it's useless.

Early Red Herrings:
Your mailbox, the book on the bathroom floor, the dragon.

What To Do When The Phone Rings In Your House:
Answer it, you fool! It's on the desk in the library.

What To Do When The Postman Calls At Xam's House:
Read the note he leaves in the mailbox and then dial the number using the phone in Xam's house.

How To Get Past The Bull:
Get the table cloth from the conservatory table, wave it at the bull, then throw it at the bull.

What To Do WIth The Spectacles From The Magpie:
Wear them to see in the dark.

CORRUPTION



Getting Started:
Take the share certificate and amended ledger from the cabinet in your office, and put them in your office for safekeeping. Then go into the corridor and listen at the wooden door.

What To Do In The Toilet:
Apart from the obvious responses, you should look in the cistern but don't take what you find.

How To Get Into David's Office:
If you wait until about 10am, then Theresa will go for a break.

Phone Calls Worth Listening In On:
One at about 11.25 and another about 12.10. Pick up the phone a minute or so beforehand and just wait till the conversations begin. Take the first one in your office, the second in Theresa's.

How To Avoid WInding Up In The Hospital:
You can't – you need to go there, then escape.

THE GUILD OF THIEVES



Getting Started:
Jump west to get on the jetty, then help the old man (which gets you into the castle).

In The Drawing Room:
Examine the settee, get the cushion and then open the cushion.

Which Rat To Bet On:
The grey one.

What To Do In The Junk Room:
Move the junk.

How To Get Into The Windmill:
Shout and ask the miller to "Please stop the vanes."

Hot To Get The Miller's Loot:
Buy it with the cheque from the rat race but be sure to put the lute in your swag bag and close the bag before you leave.

How To Open The Safe On The Wall Of The Gallery:
You can't.

FISH!



How To Make Coffee For The Producer:
You can't so tell Rod to do it.. Works every time.

How To Play The Various Cassettes:
First watch out for the bug which means that if you put the tapes in the player first, you can't actually get them out again and also can't complete this section. So PLAY CLEANER IN PLAYER first to clean the heads, then SET FADER TO 3 so you can hear the playback. Then play the ferric cassette, the chrome cassette and the metal cassette, in that order.

To Avoid The Exploding Parrot:
Open its cage and then go to another location. It'll fly out after you've left and explode somewhere in the jungle.

How To Get Past The Hippies:
Make sure you're wearing all the clothes from the van and also switch off the torch when carrying the pew.

How To Get The Gargoyle:
Stand on the pew, tie the gargoyle with the cord from the altar, get down again and PULL CORD.

When You Arrive In Roach's Appartment, Hydropolis:
Check your watch, look behind the fishton, examine the shelf and the switch, and to get out you PUT HAND ON PRINT.

IT'S GOODBYE FROM HIM

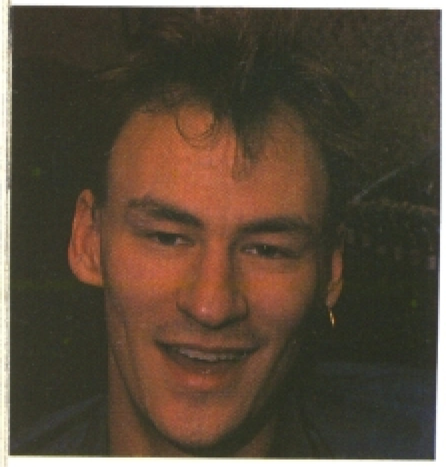


Well, that's it from me this month folks! I shall go away and prune my beard in excited anticipation of your hints, tips, problems, photos, diaries... (*Steady on! Ed.*). Speak out on adventures by writing to me, The Man With The Beard, Adventures, ZERO, !4 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1DE.



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MISSION SOFTWARE
Mission Software, Hill House, Middlefield Road, Pitney,

CHIP SHOP BOYS



This month, ZERO's *Tim Ponting* lays his sanity on the line when he tries some happy talk with Captain 'I said WOT?' Sensible.



HAPPY TALK

In a tiny attic office in Notting Hill Gate, Captain Sensible is glued to the latest reviews of his new album *Revolution Now*.

"*Sounds* called me one of the world's most disgusting slobs," he explains genially. "It was a good review though and I also got a good one in *NME*. You must read it."

"Here's *Music Week*: 'This album should give the Captain the songwriting credit he deserves...' Aaaargh! 'Tracks like *A Riot On Eastbourne Pier* have simplistic yet charismatic qualities about them that makes this a refreshing set...' Aaaaaargh! Brilliant!"

He waves another disk, this time labelled 'Steinburg', referring to the German software house of the same name. Well, nearly anyway. I point out that it's spelt wrong. "Typical," mutters his press officer. The camera shutter begins to click away on motor-wind...

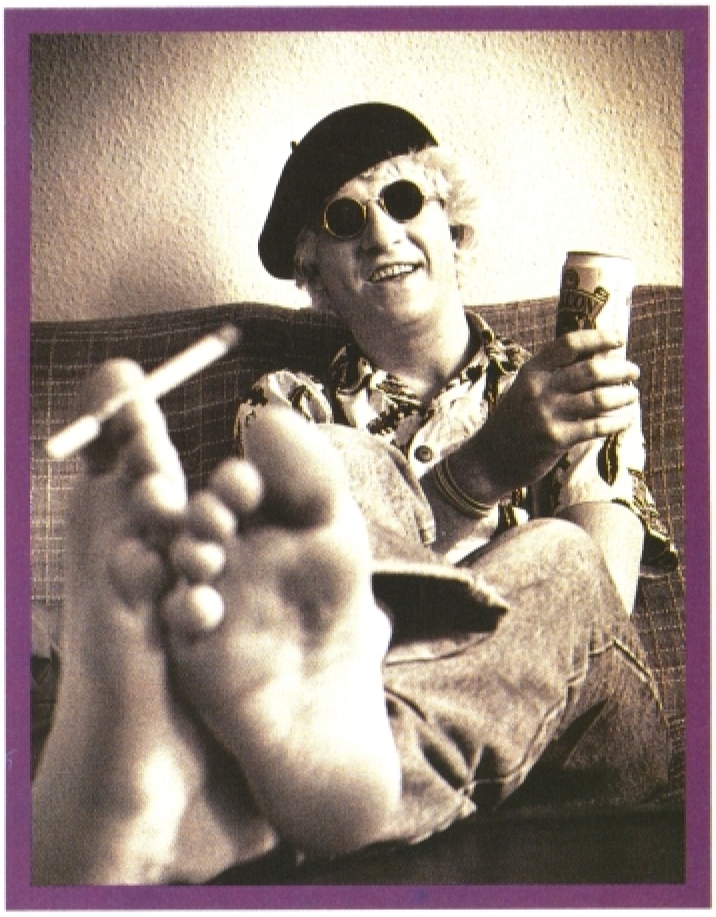
"You'd wipe the bloody thing!"

It's pretty weird to find an ex-punk axeman who composes and records his music with the help of a computer. Captain Sensible ('Capt' to his friends) bought his Atari ST two years ago and now finds it indispensable.

"When I started using computers, it was all totally beyond me. I was just a humble guitarist who played in a punk band. So I left me computer down the studio and the other guys learnt to use it.. When we got thrown out of the studio, I took the thing back home and forced myself to get to grips with it. All very much trial and error stuff. I'd spend a good couple of hours putting something together and then I'd accidently wipe the bloody thing!"

The Captain uses the Steinberg Pro 24 sequencing program almost exclusively. That way he can write music at home, then for the recording, take his disks down to the studio, where they also have an Atari set-up.

"It's a good system. I'm going to a recording studio tomorrow that's got the same 16 track tape recorder and computer as me. All I do is take me disks down and mix it. But I always do the drums in the studio live so as to use all the effects units which I haven't got at home. In fact, I've just spent the last four days drum programming for new songs. I've got an Akai S950 sampler and I really like the drum page on the Steinberg. T'rific. I've just discovered the 'loop function'. If you do a 16 bar passage, you only have



to get two bars together, loop 'em and then copy 'em with the repeat function. Then you go through and fine tune putting in fills and stuff like that. It's just so much quicker to do it that way."

A fax arrives giving the details of an important Sensible appointment. 'P.S. Don't forget your guitar' reads a footnote. I begin to wonder just what makes a punk strummer turn to the evil God of the Silicon Chip.

"What do you call someone who hangs around with musicians?" asks the Captain.

Dunno.

"A drummer," he laughs.

I make a trite comment. Well, probably more offensive than trite.

"Are you a drummer?"

Erm, yes.

"Well, that's why I use the computer. After twelve years with Rat Scabies (drummer with The Damned), anyone would fall in love with a Steinberg. No, don't print that, he won't buy me any more drinks... (*Sorry Captain, couldn't resist it. Ed.*). I also really like working on my own," he explains. "It's a bit antisocial but I work with a lot of musicians and if you write the songs yourself, that way you don't end up with someone else's interpretation. I'm a rubbish keyboard player but the quantise function is quite fantastic. (A function of the sequencer that automatically corrects bad timing). You can slow the track right down to about 25 beats per minute and play your keyboard part in much more slowly. Then you speed it up and it sounds fab!"

Meanwhile, the cat has finally managed to get out onto the ledge and is investigating the possibility of abseiling down the side of 14A Notting Hill Gate without a harness.

"I hate that cat," adds the Captain sombrely before returning to the subject in hand. "Whenever I saw people using computers in music, I thought that it was the computer that made it sound robotic. When I got mine, the first things I sequenced were totally sixties sounding. Computers don't make music sound like a robot, it's just the way you press the buttons. If you listen to the album, it's full of old sixties twang. I'll just briefly play you a snippet."

The Captain now gets very sensible as he explains how each track was put together on the Atari.

"I never use a mouse – I haven't got room for one. I use all the controls on the keypad. It's brilliantly quick once you get used to it – you get this method together with the up/down and right/left arrows. 'Ddlldlldlldddldldl' like that and it's up at the top, then pull the thing down here, save and press the return button. Do you see what I mean?" Erm, yeah, sure thing Capt....

He reels off all the little bits of gear he's pulled together to record the album – mostly ancient and outdated. I ask him if he uses any other music programs for the Atari, suggesting he might use it to program the Akai sampler – a much simpler option than using the instrument's own complex system.

"Blimey, yeah, that's a good idea. I haven't got a program for that. I've got an editor for the Roland D50 (a powerful synthesiser) which is t'rific. You can put a load of patches together and store them on the Atari. I can't remember the name of the program but what I really like about it is the RANDOMIZE function. You press this button and get a completely different sound. It tweaks everything inside the D50, it just goes beserk. There's a little line thing on the screen and if you put the arrow at the very end of it, it completely changes everything by 100 per cent, goes totally mega mad. Some of the sounds I've got out of it are absolutely t'riffic. Sometimes I sit there for a couple of hours after I come back from the pub, just pressing the RANDOMIZE button. You get fifty new sounds that are really quite strange and off the wall. I got a really great sitar one actually which goes bigieowieowieow..."

And now he's off on another tangent, setting up a business importing sitars. Pakistan is called to find out prices and 20 sitars are ordered there and then. My mind begins to wander and I begin to fantasize about inventing a MIDI sitar for controlling synthesizers. "That's a great idea. A MIDI sitar – that's bloody perfect." And then for no apparent reason the Captain suddenly sends a fax to the office of Benazir Bhutto, suggesting she check out his new album. "I get quite excited about the fax machine, it's good fun," he explains. Eventually, I manage to turn his attention away from world domination and back to the humble computer.

"What else have I got for the Atari? Let me see. Oh yeah, I've got a great game which is like Chinese chequers where you have to get rid of the titles." He laughs." I completely OD'd on computer games. I bought just about every game in existence when I had the Commodore. Not having a screen, I used to use me dad's TV in his living room. He'd come downstairs on his way to work at six in the morning and I'd still be there playing this cricket game. Even when he got back from work I'd still be there playing it. 'I want to watch the television,' he'd say. 'Let me just finish this game,' I'd reply. The cricket game, like the football manager one, can go on and on and on in three day binges. I just OD'd on them, I hardly play 'em now. I don't do things by halves, you know."

Opening another can, he takes a gulp and continues, "My favourite video game I ever had – which is totally ideologically unsound because it's an American' Let's knock the Russians on the head' game – was called *Beachead*. I think it was a company called US Gold who produced it. Fantastic game it was totally great, about seven games in one. It has this fighter plane near the end – you can sort of turn from side to side and all that stuff. The screen is almost 3D, it's really clever. That was on the Commodore." He frowns. "I got rid of that, a bloody pain in the butt that machine was. I used to think all computers were like the Commodore 64 – having to load them with a cassette, such a bloody drag. I still can't fathom how systems now work with a little disk. All that information... When you listen to a cassette, it goes "eiierghh aarghrgh', I can understand that, but how the little disk holds it, is totally beyond me."

"Benazir Bhutto, check out his album."

Aware that the conversation is about to plunge even deeper into the wonders of modern technology, I begin to excuse myself and slowly wend my towards the door and the comparative sanity of the outside world. It's now that every one suddenly realises that the Walkman has been recording every word for the past hour and a half and has witnessed some pretty dodgy revelations. (And we're not talking Ataris but world issues like Pakistan, international politics and black market MIDI sitars.) One of the Sensible crew cries frantically "That tape might get stolen by some Iranian fanatical group!" Captain Sensible in Salman Rushdie hostage mix-up? Er, no, I don't think so somehow.

"Let's knock the Russians on the head."

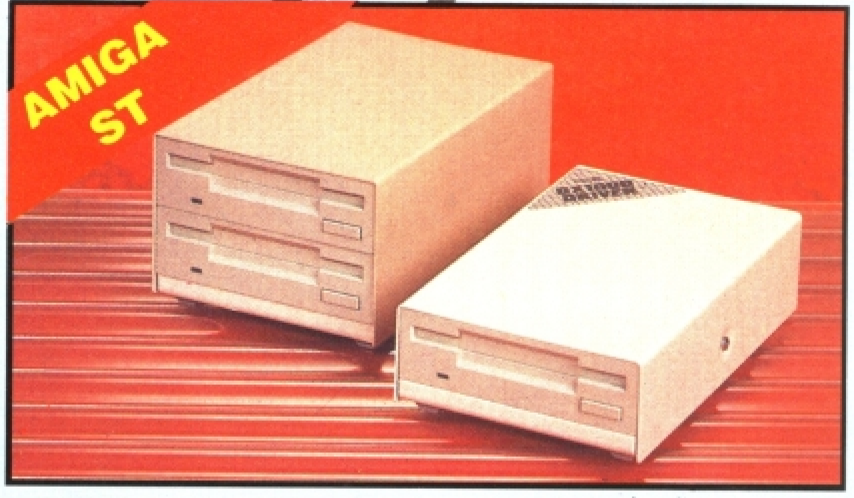
Come back Rat Scabies, everything's forgiven.

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MUSIC LESSONS

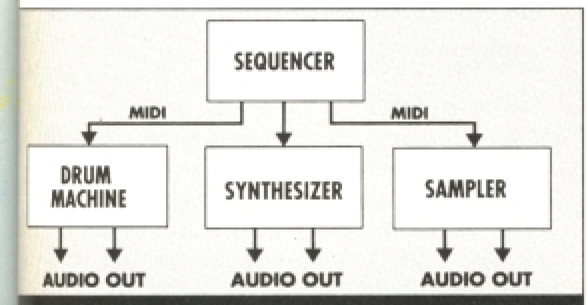
PARLEZ -VOUS MIDI?

It's *Tim Pirelli* talking MIDIs again, spouting instrument set-ups and taking a peek at sequencers, samplers and synths....

Just to recap for those of you who missed Part One of the MIDI feature last month, a MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is a communications system that allows hi-tech pieces of musical equipment to talk to each other. To help you get the picture, let's take a gander at a couple of simple instrument set-ups involving MIDI.

A simple set-up (diagram 1) is where you control two synthesizers from a "master" synthesizer. The master synth is normally called a MIDI controller (and it could be anything from a keyboard to a drum kit – as long as it has MIDI). Other synths can be complete instruments in their own right or they could be "expanders". Expanders are synths or samplers without keyboards designed to be played from a MIDI controller. People often use them to save space and shekels (or both) in a MIDI music set-up. After all, why buy loads of zappy keyboards when you've only got two hands? (*And one overdrawn bank account. Ed.*)

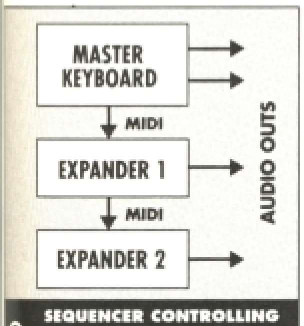
Each of the instruments produce sounds as if they're being played from its own keyboard but receive note information from the controller. So sound from a number of instruments can be "layered" together to produce a "bigger" sound, or they can be spread out across the master keyboard so you



1 OPERATING TWO SYNTHESIZERS WITH A MIDI CONTROLLER

can play them separately. This is called keyboard "splitting" or "zoning". And it's not actually as painful as it sounds!

Or 'owzabout a sequencer controlling a drum machine, a synthesizer and a sampler? (Diagram 2). Here the sounds are being generated by the drum machine, synthesizer and sampler, but the note info for the song is stored in the sequencer. The sequencer needs to tell each of the other pieces of gear what notes to play and it does this over MIDI. It's a bit like an orchestra where a conductor (our sequencer) is directing all the musicians (the synth and sampler) to play the music. Just like 'the Captain' himself advises, it's worth remembering how computers can be used as sequencers.



2 SEQUENCER CONTROLLING DRUM MACHINE, SYNTHESIZER AND SAMPLER

So how does the MIDI make all this possible? It's a cinch really – just press a note down. The MIDI will be able to tell that a note has been pressed, what that note is (MIDI Note ON and MIDI Note Number), how hard you pressed it (Note Velocity Information) and when you release it (Note Off Information). Other information can also be generated but we'll cross that bridge when we come to it. (*Phew. Ed.*)

Just like in the computer world, the key to MIDI is compatibility. Any instrument whether it's a reverb unit or a teasmade (*What? Ed*) that you want to include in your MIDI set-up needs to be "MIDI compatible." If you're not sure whether your instrument is fitted with MIDI, have a look at the back panel. If you don't find sockets marked MIDI In, MIDI Out and MIDI Thru, it almost certainly won't want to play ball. If you're using an Atari ST you'll find MIDI In and Out connections on the left hand side of the computer. If you're the proud owner of an Amiga you'll hunt in vain, but don't worry because you can buy MIDI interfaces – a sort of MIDI interpreter – to sort things out.

One of the problems when dealing with MIDI is grasping exactly what's being talked about. Most of us encounter this throughout life – if you're smart you'll make a career out of it and become Cecil Parkinson, if not keep drinking Carling Black Label. *(Blimey! He's gone all philosophical on us. Ed.)* But before talking MIDI more fluently, let's feast our minces at the musical gear that goes with it...

MIDI MUSIC CENTRE

SYNTHS

A synthesizer is an electronic instrument that generates sound using oscillators, filters, amplifiers and hundreds of other impressive terms. Don't worry about them and they won't worry you – just yet. Synths come in a variety of forms: analogue synths are old and unreliable, but very hip in dance music and acid house. Digital synths also come in several shapes and sizes but the most common is the Yamaha DX series. These have got a lot to answer for though, 'cos they're responsible for many of the painful noises on Stock, Aitken and Waterman productions. (*What? Kylie's a lovely gel. Ed.*)

SAMPLERS

Samplers are basically digital tape recorders. They allow you to record a sound and play it back in lots of different ways – forward, backward, at different pitches. They can be used for almost anything, from imitating real instruments like flutes and violins to ripping off other people's original ditties.

SEQUENCERS

A musical performance (provided it's played on MIDI instruments) can be recorded into a sequencer. This recording can be edited, sounds can be changed and the whole thing can be played back at different speeds. The thing to remember about sequencers is that they record MIDI information, not audio info. This means you can't record a singer (vocalist not sewing machine), bagpipes or anything at all that makes sounds in the natural world.

DRUM MACHINES

Drum machines are a cross between a sampler and a sequencer. They're samplers because all the sounds in them are sampled (unless it's a very old one) and they're sequencer because they let you record 'drum patterns' into them. Best of all the music-making is simpler than for either of the other instruments – probably in an attempt to make it more like a real drummer!

These are the basics building blocks of a MIDI set-up and we'll be referring to them regularly. Some of you may already be making music with your computer using the internal sound chip. Although these chips are very limited compared to most MIDI equipment, you've taken the first step in the world of electronic music and you'll probably be familiar with some of the synthesis techniques. You may also be able to use MIDI to hear your music played with more impressive sounds using synths and samplers. All you need is patience and a massive wad...



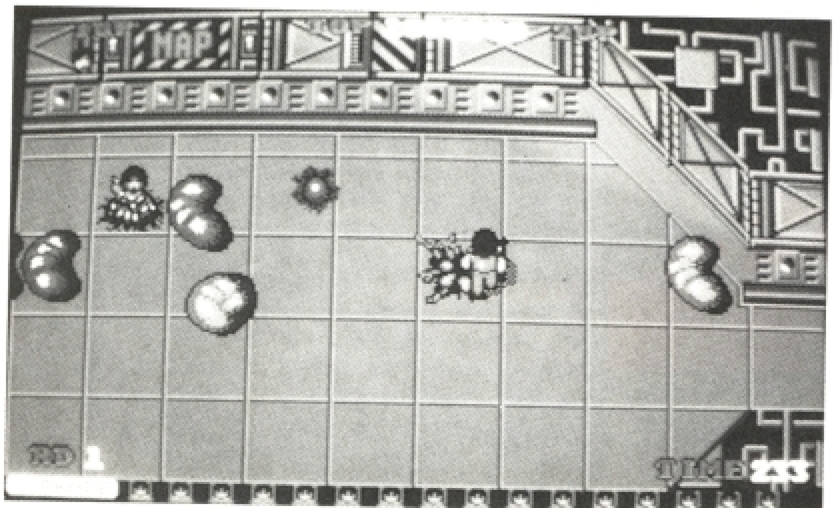
THE PRICE I$ RIGHT

Come on down! *Sean Kelly* returns with a selection from the bargain basement for all the skint so-and-sos who've just shelled out for the latest Kylie album.

ALIEN SYNDROME

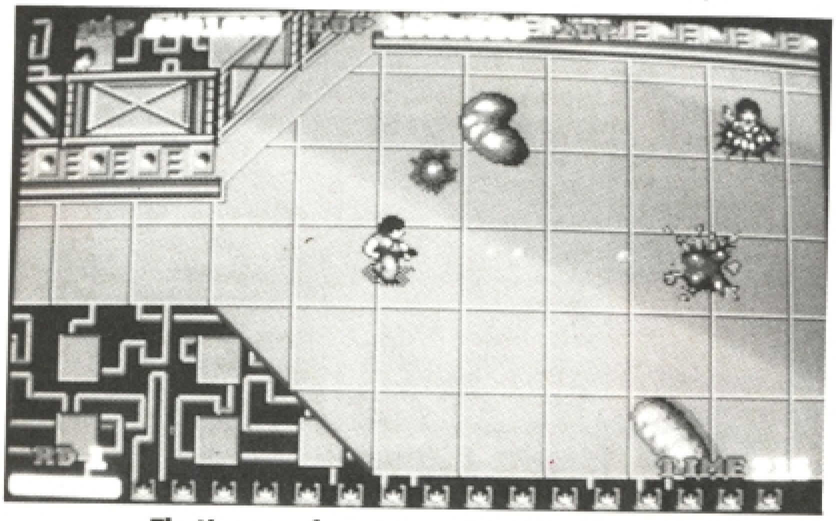
RAD/£9.99 ST & Amiga

***Alien Syndrome* is a conversion of a Sega coin-op from the last century which first appeared on the 16-bits a couple of years ago, and has now been given a new lease of life on The Edge's new budget label, RAD. The object of the game is to rescue your friends who, for reasons best known to themselves, have allowed themselves to be captured by giant jellybeans. Why you would want to save anyone stupid enough to get captured by jellybeans is beyond me, but then game scenarios have never been known for their Booker Prize potential.**



This could happen to you if you eat too many jelly beans.

Rescuing the thickos involves the usual charging round several huge complexes, killing the jellybeans and collecting extra weaponry as you go. Unusually for an arcade game, there are occasional pauses in gameplay, for example when you access a map. Dotted round the complexes are a number of maps, that'll indicate where your remaining friends are, and your position. Accessing them is done by simply running into the map icon. A map then presents itself in a corner of the screen, allowing you to plan a path to follow in your rescue attempt of the thickos. Once all your mates have been rescued, it's time to make for the exit to take on the 'end of complex' meanie, who resembles a peeled pensioner on a cloud. *(Seen any lately? Ed.)*



That's one of your stupid 'chums' in the top corner.

***Alien Syndrome* was well received when it first hit the 16-bit market, and although it's showing its age a little, it still gets the ol' trigger finger blasting away with gay abandon. The aliens are large and plentiful, which makes them easy to blast, but also easy to barge into, bringing about your demise with depressing regularity. Using the maps and other wall mounts definitely adds a novel element to the gameplay, and rather increases the attractiveness of *Alien Syndrome*.**

The noises are fairly average – an awful tune and unmemorable in-game effects are for the most part annoying. Graphics are detailed and colourful, although the speed of scrolling varies tremendously and seems to depend on the direction you are heading in for some reason.

***Alien Syndrome* is smooth and colourful and worthy of any 16-bit collection – at 10 quid there's no excuse for not owning a copy.**

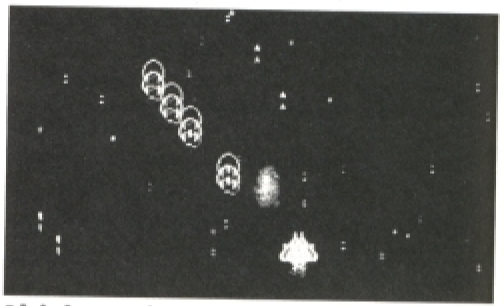
OVERALL SCORE 83

FIRE BLASTER

Prism Leisure/£5.99 ST & Amiga

You know when you're stuck in a grotty motorway service station and you make for an arcade machine to relieve the boredom? Then when you get there a bunch of Chelsea fans are hogging *Op Wolf*, all the other machines are broken, and there's just a slightly grotty looking machine, that you've never heard of, in the corner? You shove your money in, expecting something dire, but then discover that, despite its primitive nature, there's quite a chunk of playability in there. Well *Fireblaster* is just like that.

It's a straightforward blaster like *Gorf* where a screenful of aliens appear for blasting. Once they're wiped out, another screenful arrives. The graphics are fairly simple (as is your spaceship) and the



Alright, so it doesn't look brilliant, but it's playable - honest.

sound is very much like every other budget that's been released.

In short, *Fireblaster* has its fair wodge of playability and a large amount of that vital 'one more go' factor. Call me warped, but there you have it!

OVERALL SCORE 76

ADDICTABALL

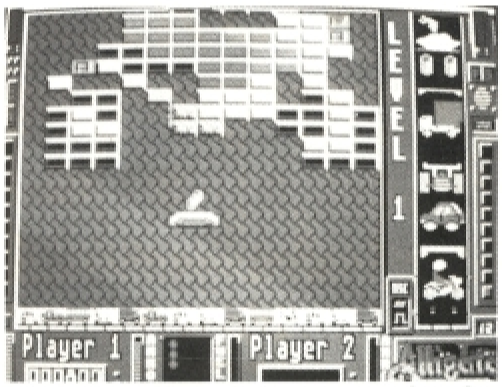
Alligata/£5.99 ST

Addictaball eh? What a game title. It most probably ranks in the top ten crap puns ever foisted upon computer gamers. This is an unreleased 16-bit version of the eight-bit *Addictaball* – an *Arkanoid* rip-off dating from 1987. Being such, you'll know exactly what to do in this little number – namely use your 'spaceship' (bat to you and me) to bash your ball (Ouch!) against the bricks to break through the wall.

Even though it's a blatant rip-off it does differ in several aspects – instead of presenting a succession of screens to work through, the whole lot scrolls slowly downwards towards your bat. This means you must make sure that there is a clear path through the bricks, as contact will destroy your bat.

Underneath your bat is a barrier, and occasionally fireballs and bricks will fall towards it. You must catch them if possible – otherwise they'll make holes in the barrier, through which the ball can fall, thus destroying another bat. In addition there are the usual icons to collect, giving you fire power, new ammo, slow balls etc.

Despite the dire name, *Addictaball* is an excellent variation on the *Arkanoid* theme. They're no fantastic programming routines or anything, but then there's none needed. What's here is loads of



Your turbocharged bat, erm.... heads for destruction guns a blazin'

colour and sound along with smooth scrolling. It will insist on sending you all the way back to the start of a level each time you die, but apart from this one pain in the bottom, there's oodles of playability and enough levels to keep you at it for days and days.

In fact I'd go as far to say that it's better than some of the full price product knocking around, and at six quid, there's absolutely no reason why you shouldn't go out and buy it this very second. Apart from finishing reading ZERO, that is.

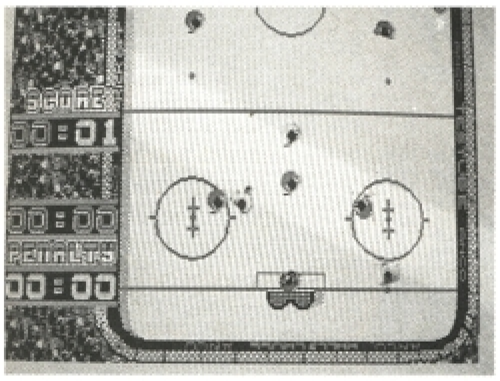
OVERALL SCORE 85

ICE HOCKEY

Anco/£5.99 ST & Amiga

Ice Hockey's one of those strange sports which, due to its nature, appeals only to those living within a walking distance of the North Pole, namely Canadians, Eskimos and polar bears. This should not however, prevent a conversion to the 16-bits – let's face it, if darts and golf can make it, any sport can, providing the right amount of playability is thrown in.

Ah, playability. I knew there was something missing. That's where *Ice Hockey* slips, if you'll excuse the incredibly bad pun. The front end is fairly impressive, and leads you to expect that once you're playing, you'll be in for some chunky fun. Not so. The playing area is actually larger than the screen so you have to scroll – it's extremely slow and



Who's for a quick puck then?

jerky. As for the graphics, they're also very primitive and the sound is average.

The players move round the playing area like tortoises on valium, and all at the same pace, which makes tackling and chasing practically impossible. As is passing, scoring, etc.

A sloppy little number which, with a little more attention may have been a commendable budget title. But then again it might not.

OVERALL SCORE 43

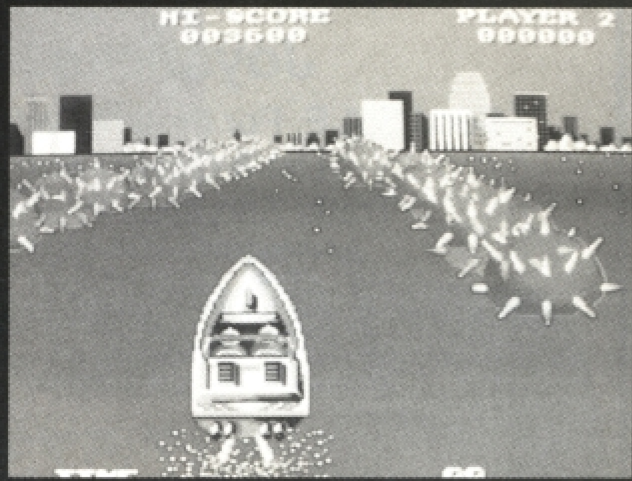
SPEEDBOAT ASSASINS

16 Blitz/4.99 ST & Amiga

Four of the world's harbours have been occupied by enemy forces, and it is your duty to liberate each of the four harbours in turn. To do so you will first have to guide your motorboat through a highly hazardous minefield. If you make it, then you can go ahead and destroy the four towers defending the harbour but you must make good your escape. This isn't actually as easy as it sounds 'cos defending the towers are loads of other boats, all armed with a seemingly endless supply of missiles. You'd have a better chance of flying a kite on the moon than escaping from this lot, if it weren't for your supply helicopter.

Every 30 seconds or so, this helicopter will hover above you, and your boat needs to dock with it in order to upgrade the weaponry available to you. First you get a cannon, then a double firing cannon, before working your way up to smart bombs which make life a lot easier.

Overall this is quite an addictive little game. The graphics are all huge and get huger as they scroll towards you at an incredible rate of knots. They are solidly coloured, and the scrolling really does give a feeling of speed as you belt along the water. There's plenty going on in the ol' joystick mashing department: dodging bombs as well as launching your own at the myriad of enemies should keep the most eager blaster happy. Another budget winner, and a lesson to all producing crap at 20 quid.



Attack of the giant mutozoid catamarans

OVERALL SCORE 78

ROAD WARS II

16 Blitz/£4.99 ST & Amiga

Normally you'd be rolling along quite happily in your space-tank as the special roadways let you pass safely between a handful of satellite moons. But today's another kettle of fish 'cos the computer controlling the roadways has gone haywire! Instead of allowing people to travel safely across the roads in true Tufty style, it's removed some of the side panels, forcing vehicles to tumble off the road never to be seen again (except by folk with extremely large telescopes and bionic eyes.) What's more, some panels are sending deadly blue sparks across the roadway, ruthlessly destroying everything which comes into contact with them.

Now this is bad enough, but what's even more unfortunate is that you and a friend have been chosen to go and sort the rogue computer out. Fab, eh? Fortunately however, sorting out the computer involves shooting lots of things and blowing aliens up. You 've got to travel along the road, shooting out the blue panels which are creating the hazardous sparks. Missing them will destroy the useful panels which keep you safely on the road, but failure to smash them will result in your tank crashing through the sparks and being destroyed if you don't raise your shields in time. In addition there are the usual weapons to collect, and more aliens to blow up than you can shake a stick at.

This all adds up to some pretty frantic and rabid blasting, as you belt down the roadways – either alone with a computer-controlled partner, or with a friend. The scrolling is smooth and fast, while the noises throughout the game are chunky and clanky. Blasting never ever slows down, and getting the timing right (ie when to switch between shield mode and blast mode) requires large amounts of dexterity and skill.

It does seem that there's too much going on at times, and you don't actually get to do anything other than blast. But having said that, *Road Wars II* is well worth five quid of anybody's money.



A bit like the hard shoulder of the M1

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ZERO

ISSUE TWO

CONSOLE ACTION

INSIDE

Konix Multi-System in big trouble

Amstrad's cheapie console plans

Mega games planned from US Gold and Ocean

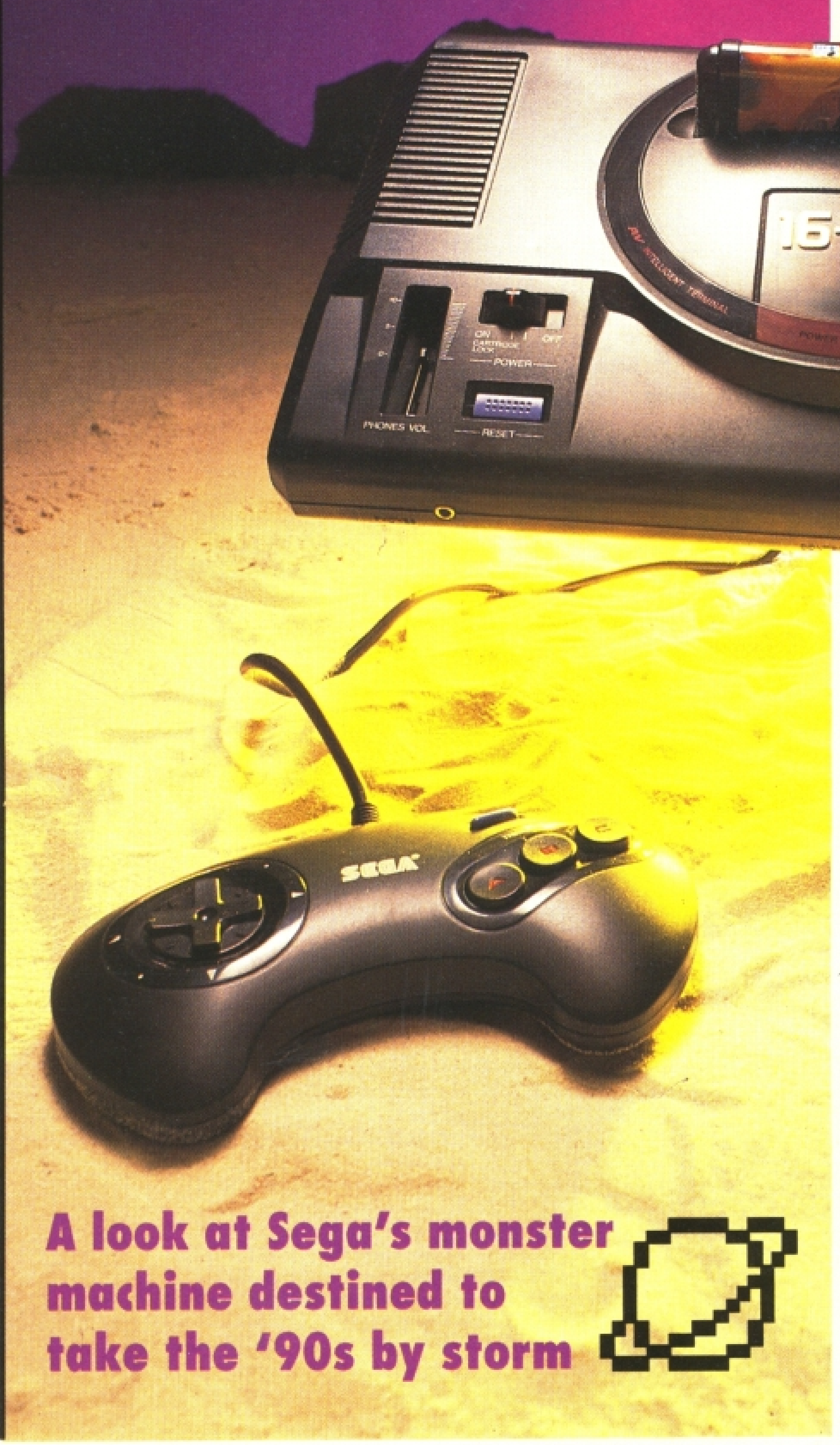
TV fame for Sega's console

Nintendo games explosion

Plus news, reviews, tips and cheats

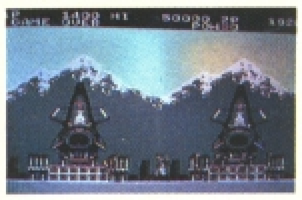
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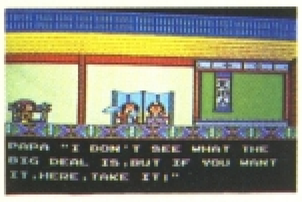


A look at Sega's monster machine destined to take the '90s by storm

REVIEWED



RUSH'N ATTACK
Frantic simultaneous two-player shoot 'em up action from Nintendo



ALEX KIDD
Cutesy Sega adventure in Hi-Tech World with the lad with the ears

BRING ON THOSE 16-BITS

Frankly, I'm in need of some heavy consoling. The so-called next generation of consoles have been available in other countries – namely Japan and America – for ages. So why have we been left out? Why shouldn't we be allowed to drool over seductive 16-bit graphics and listen to the sensational sounds of the PC Engine and Sega Megadrive?



Would you pay over £200 for the 16-bit Sega? We did. See page 100.

And just to make matters worse, America and Japan are already gearing themselves up for the next wave of consoles. Hold on a minute, we haven't even seen the previous lot yet!

Nec has just launched its 16-bit version of the PC Engine, and Sega are reportedly working on a CD-ROM device for the Megadrive. Although technically the current PC Engine is held together by an 8-bit processor, it performs like any other 16-bit console because of its phenomenally powerful video and sound circuitry. Just thinking about a 16-bit version of the Engine makes the mind boggle.

Virgin Mastertronic has promised to distribute the Megadrive by the middle of next year. Nec is considering selling the 8-bit Engine in this country, but hasn't any immediate plans while Konix has been promising a 16-bit console for the last six months. Ho hum.

Come on, guys! By the time this technology reaches our shores it will be dated. Passé. A bygone. Obsolete. Dead! Know what I mean?

Don't get me wrong, I haven't really got anything against the 8-bit Segas and Nintendos but judging by some of the latest games available for them, their full potential won't be reached for some time yet. They're damn fine machines but they are getting a teensy bit old.

Sadly the situation won't change. Although the Japs are interested in money, they see us as small fry and aren't particularly fond of us. They're not too keen on the Americans either but the lure of hundreds of thousands of sales is obviously irresistible. The only hope we have of getting 16-bit console technology in the home quickly, is if innovative UK companies like Konix go out there and do the biz. So go get 'em lads!

MEGADRIVE MAYHEM

Grey importers pounce on Sega's Console

Are you a power addict? Does the prospect of getting your hands on a new Sega 16-bit Megadrive make you foam at the mouth? Just recently a tempting spate of ads have appeared offering the Megadrive for around £250. To say Virgin Mastertronic (official Sega distributors) is upset would be an understatement. Virgin aren't distributing the Megadrive in the UK until Easter next year, so these grey importers could make a killing in the meantime.

According to the rumours, there are absolutely no problems with the Scart version of the new Megadrives, but Virgin is saying that the Pal versions (those designed to run with a standard UK television set) are faulty. Of course they would say that, wouldn't they?

Leads are supposedly being connected inside the Megadrive to make the machines function okay on our TVs. It seems that many Pal Megadrives only produce a black and white picture.

Virgin Mastertronic are washing their hands of *this* Megadrive. Console Action was told: "They're very dodgy. We're refusing to offer any support whatsoever for them, so if anything goes wrong then the customer is on his own."

We talked to one of the grey importers about the changes that must be made to the imported Megadrives. They said: "We've heard nothing about these kind of changes, but people who purchase the Megadrive from us have to accept that we can't offer guarantees. All we're doing is importing the machine. We don't know anything about how it works."

The price of these imported Megadrives is also disturbing for Virgin. They are hoping to market them for under £150 sometime next year. You still need to go climbing down wishing wells to find that sort of dosh, but it doesn't compare with the £200 plus demanded by the grey importers.

The good news is that many popular games including *Ghouls 'N' Ghosts, Altered Beast, Super Thunderblade* and *Space Harrier II* are being brought into the country along with the 16-bit console. These games are retailing for between £30 and £40 – again a major price leap on Mastertronic's proposed selling point of just £20. But while there's so little support elsewhere in the UK for 16-bit Sega software, the situation will continue and afflicted games addicts will just have to pay these extortionate fees.

KONIX KLIFFHANGER

The future of the Konix Multi-System is hanging in the balance. Rumours have been flying round for months but things now seem to have reached crisis point.

Konix has over-stretched itself financially with the Multi-System project and is finding itself in a bit of a pickle. It'll either have to drop its plans, or the whole (or part) of Konix will have to be bought out. Already companies like Amstrad and Atari have been named as possible front runners.

Unfortunately, Konix are still reeling after US-based software giant, Epyx, recently went bust. Epyx owed Konix a vast sum of money for all those great Speedking joysticks it distributed all over the shop. Then Epyx's sudden downfall left Konix in a very precarious position. And to make matters worse, the continual re-development of the Konix Multi-System is eating up cash quicker than a Pacman hooked on Power Pills.

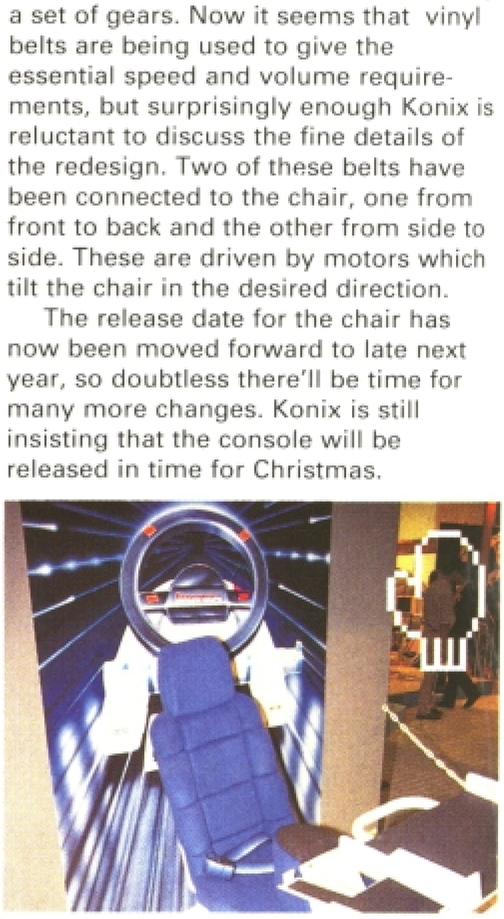
All eyes are now on Konix boss Wyn Holloway to see if he can rescue his company yet again. So stay tuned.

BELT UP!

Konix has redesigned the power chair for the Multi-System yet again (it's turning out to be a real popular hobby this one) in a bid to ensure that it is as near perfect as possible by the time it's released. That's Konix's excuse, anyway.

The chair has been re-jigged to make the drive mechanism quieter and faster. Previously the chair was operated using a set of gears. Now it seems that vinyl belts are being used to give the essential speed and volume requirements, but surprisingly enough Konix is reluctant to discuss the fine details of the redesign. Two of these belts have been connected to the chair, one from front to back and the other from side to side. These are driven by motors which tilt the chair in the desired direction.

The release date for the chair has now been moved forward to late next year, so doubtless there'll be time for many more changes. Konix is still insisting that the console will be released in time for Christmas.



QUICKIES

SEGA ON TV

It's official – the Sega console is becoming a superstar. Queue right here for autographs. Yes, the console is actually going to be advertised on TV over the next few months. It got coverage on a Channel 4 documentary about computers and new technology recently, and a lot more television coverage has been promised right through till January.

From the middle of this month to December 22nd, *The Saturday Show*, an early morning kids' TV programme, will feature youngsters competing against each other on Sega consoles.

Further childrens' television coverage is planned in *Motormouth*, where a competition will be arranged and a number of Sega 8-bit consoles will be given away.

Then, in January *QED* (yawn!) is planning a documentary on entertainment and technology aimed at children. Filming for this took place at the PC Show.

NINTENDO NESI?

For all the latest in the zappy, zany world of Nintendo why not subscribe to the Club Nintendo magazine – and what's more, it's absolutely free! There are game reviews, tips, features and news designed to keep you informed of the latest in Nintendo developments. Write to NESI UK, PO Box 30, Coventry, CV1 3BR and claim your free membership. The club even offers a number for you to ring when you're stuck in a game. The number to dial is 0626 68611. But needless to say – you can't beat Console Action – the magazine devoted entirely to the colossal world of consoles!

CHEAP CONSOLE FROM AMSTRAD

Amstrad looks set to enter the console market place with a Z80-based machine centred around the CPC. And if the rumours are correct, it'll be aimed at the low-end games market.

Just about all the major computer companies are beginning to recognise the potential of the console market and Atari's hand-held games console – the Lynx – is due to be released very shortly.

The planned console is seen as more of a toy than a machine and would be used by dedicated games players. This move is hardly surprising since the console, being based on the 8-bit Amstrad CPC computer, will have capabilities similar to existing 8-bit consoles. Amstrad's model is unlikely to be launched much before April 1990 – by that time Nintendo, Sega and Konix should all have their 16-bit consoles on the market. There will be far more interest in the 16-bit machines, but because of Amstrad's aggressive pricing (£70 has been touted for the console) it'll probably sell like Perrier in... er... Paris?

Amstrad's Alan Sugar intends to keep the console compatible with the CPC to provide a decent software base for the console. New custom video and sound chips have been considered, but it's unlikely that these will be used if the new console is to remain compatible.

The developers of the new console have apparently been instructed to rip apart the five year old CPC (the fun part) and turn it into a 256K console (oh dear!). There will be no disk drive or cassette system – software coming on cartridge instead. Existing CPC software will be transferred onto this cartridge and should run without problems. New software is likely to use the extra memory to exploit the capabilities of the console to the full.

Amstrad's movement into the console market is surprising given that the company has long been shining its corporate image. However, at the end of the day, Sugar's aim is to amass as much dosh as possible. And with consoles set to take off in 1990, Amstrad is eager to get its portion of the sales.

NINTENDO GO GAME CRAZY

Keep your eyes peeled and your ears to the ground at your local Nintendo software stockist 'cos four great new games should be hitting their shelves pretty damn soon.

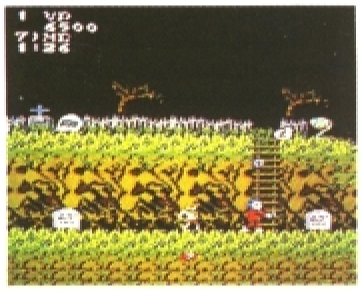
***Trojan*, *Gun Smoke* and *Ghosts 'N' Goblins* are all Capcom licences converted from the arcade machines, while *Ikari Warriors* (also a coin-up conversion) featured on all home computer formats long ago, but only now can it make its Nintendo debut.**



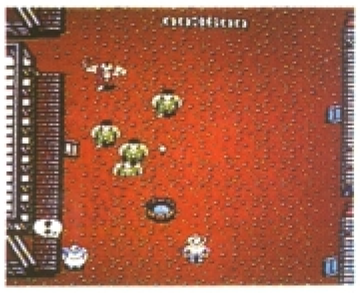
***Trojan* has great animated sequences and beautiful sprites in this action adventure game where you use a sword and shield to fend off all attackers.**



***Ikari Warriors* – a vertically-scrolling shoot 'em up where you must blast all the sheriffs and various gun-toting nasties.**



The brilliantly addictive *Ghosts 'N' Goblins* sees you overcoming all sorts of odd characters in your quest to rescue a beautiful princess.



***Gun Smoke*, with its action set in a gold mining town, has you battling it out against cowboys. You must save the town from money-grabbing thieves intent on slaughtering all the occupants.**

GIANT STEPS

It looks like many of the UK's software houses are finally going to lend some of their immense weight to the console market. US Gold is taking the lead by developing four titles for the 8-bit Sega and Ocean is believed to be following suit. Meanwhile, 16-bit software house Psygnosis is branching out into the PC Engine market.

US Gold was reluctant to discuss its console plans, but after we applied the thumbscrews, the company revealed that it was looking out for Sega programmers to write conversions of four of their greatest hits. *World Class Leaderboard* looks destined to be one of the first conversions.

Ocean is planning to develop its popular licences for the 8-bit Sega. This means biggies like *Robocop* and *Batman* could be available on the Sega next year. There have also been unconfirmed rumours that Ocean is looking to develop on the PC Engine, but no details are available at present.

It's obvious that Psygnosis has a fetish for England's green and pleasant lands because it's not the money that keeps Psygnosis here – its primary source of income has always come from exporting 16-bit software to Japan and the States. The PC Engine is going down a bomb in those countries, so they're looking to release software for it here within the next year. Psygnosis has always prided itself on releasing some of the finest 16-bit software for the Amiga and PC and it 's looking to continue in this direction with the PC Engine. At the moment Psygnosis is keeping very quiet about its move into the console market, but we've been given to understand that some of its top programmers have been moved onto the PC Engine.



DESPERATELY SEEKING SEGA

***Richard Montiero's* thirst for hard news made him hit the streets Philip Marlow style in a bid to get his 'hot' Megadrive – quick.**

The air hung heavy with suspense. I took one last drag on my cigarette and stubbed it out on the grimy street below. My trench-coat's rather large raised collars hid my face as I sneaked into a seedy East London store. Dodging a bearded, fat bouncer I started negotiating in whispered tones with a little Chinaman. "£180," he muttered. I gave him cash. He handed over a plain brown box which I quickly stuffed under my coat. Mission accomplished. I'd got my hands on a Megadrive!

Yep, Sega's new sensation is just starting to make its way into the UK via numerous grey importers, but the Megadrive has been on sale in Japan since the end of last year. According to Virgin Mastertronic, it's not going to be officially available here until next Easter. So it's not surprising then, that ardent games addicts are having to resort to the grey importers. We went and bought one especially, to provide you with a look at the new machine (that's our excuse and we're sticking to it).

One of the first things that hits you when you open the box is the way it looks. It's not just another console – there's no boring black (or even brown or grey) box here. The Megadrive looks the business. It's a cool matt-black with a raised plastic disc and power switch and it's got slider volume controls and a cartridge-lock button. You've only got to look at the console to know the games are gonna blow your mind.

After turning the Japanese manual on all sides, you realise it doesn't make any sense at all and bin it immediately. Now you can switch your attention to the controller. The kidney-shaped device consists of a standard 4-way control pad, a START/PAUSE button and three (yes, three!) playing buttons. Because of the shape of this controller, it fits neatly into the hand and can be gripped with easy access to all the buttons for both left and right-handed players.

GETTING A MEGADRIVE

A bit tricky really, but if you hunt around the advertisment pages you're bound to find someone importing one.

We got ours from SuperVision Electronics on 0602 475151. A Scart model (for connection to a monitor) costs £180 while a PAL version (for connection to an ordinary TV) costs £195.

The real sting is the software. It costs absolutely loads. For a full list of what's available contact SuperVision.

CHECK OUT THOSE SPECS

There are already a handful of games available for the Megadrive, but you won't be seeing most of the software until Virgin Mastertronic starts importing them around Easter next year. Grey importers are offering the best games now but at prices between £35 and £45 compared to VM's proposed selling point of £20. However, for an extra £20 only you can buy a converter which will allow you the luxury of running existing Sega 8-bit games on the Megadrive.

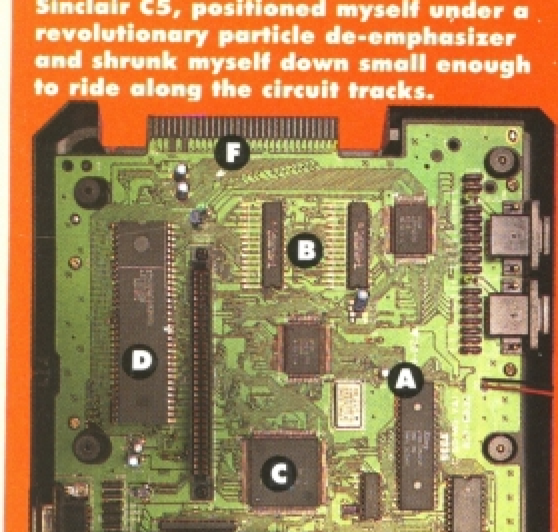
When you look at the specifications for the machine you start to realise exactly what it will be capable of producing. With a choice of 64 colours from a palette of 512 on a screen of 320 x 256 pixels you can really perform some spectacular effects. Dedicated hardware-scrolling and 64K of RAM are used to provide a picture which fills the complete area of a TV screen or monitor.

Three different sound modes are also possible. The first of these is the programmed sound generator – which is the same as the one in the Sega 8-bit, and has been included to maintain compatibility. It's also got FM stereo sound and pulse code modulation. A set of stereo headphones can be plugged into the Megadrive and the volume adjusted via a front-panel volume controller.

This isn't an Amiga without a keyboard – it's virtually an arcade machine the size of a portable CD player. The few games available are ridiculously expensivel but nevertheless more are coming. With the Nintendo 16-bit machine on its way and the Megadrive 'officially' due out for Easter, the console scene is really hotting up. By this time next year, who knows what we'll be seeing.

INCH HIGH PRIVATE EYE

To find out just what goes on inside the mysterious Megadrive, I climbed into my Sinclair C5, positioned myself under a revolutionary particle de-emphasizer and shrunk myself down small enough to ride along the circuit tracks.



A: The Zilog Z80 central processor. This is the CPU which actually controls the Amstrad CPC, Spectrum and numerous other 8-bit machines. Here, all it does is co-ordinate the running of other chip sets. It's included to maintain control with the 8-bit Sega so that existing games will run okay.

B: Customised SEGA chips control the whole basic operation. The sound chip looks after the three modes. The programmed sound generator keeps compatibility with the existing 8-bit Sega whilst two new modes have been added – FM stereo and pulse code modulation. The video chip looks after all the sprite movement, colour and scrolling. All three are surface-mounted, so if anything goes wrong here then you can kiss goodbye to your Megadrive.

C: A 64K RAM chip handles the screen display as defined by the main Sega customised video chip.

D: This beast is the main 68000 processor – the real power behind the machine. This 16-bit chip is the same as that found in the ST and Amiga. Backed up by specialist hardware scrolling and the customised Sega chips, it can perform some incredible feats.

E: All the screen output is handled here. The information to be sent to the screen is converted from digital to analogue and provides data for composite video output and RF modulation.

F: An expansion port to be used by a future CD ROM player perhaps?

CHEAT!

Your indispensable guide to crushing aliens, surviving levels and getting *Super Mario* into warp mode.

ACTION FIGHTER
Sega
When the helicopter appears, simply change into a motorbike and then back again and the chopper disappears.

ZILLION II
Sega
To defeat Baron Ricks without getting hurt just move to the right-hand side wall. When he approaches keep running right as he tries to touch JJ. When he misses, turn around and shoot him while jumping.

FANTASY ZONE
Sega
Buy all the engine parts and the ship's weapons will never run out.

SUPER MARIO BROTHERS II
Nintendo
There are warp zones contained within *Super Mario Bros II.* To use them you need to find the potions next to flower pots and use them.

TEDDY BOY
Sega
When the title screen appears, move the control pad up, down, left, right and a new screen appears. Now press up and down nine times. Press button 1 and you can select a starting round.

GUNHED
PC Engine
A ship divides in two at the end of stage one. Don't attack it for about 80 seconds and you'll get an extra 10-up and 20 new bombs.

QUARTET
Sega
On level 2, kill the monster, collect the key and star and then enter the warp door twice for a bonus sheet.

R-TYPE
PC Engine
Get all the way through the game without losing a life and then press RUN when the end message appears. You'll find you get transported to level five.

MIKE TYSON'S PUNCH-OUT
Nintendo
To get your character to start on Super Macho Man choose CONTINUE and then enter the codes: 267, 853, 7588. This will take you into the fight just before the Dream Bout with Mike Tyson.

WANTED
The best playing tips in the planet. What's more the hottest game hint of the month will be rewarded with the latest console software releases. We also want your maps, tactics and cheat codes so get scribblin' or else. *(Or else what? Ed.)*
Erm... well send in all your secrets to Cheat! Console Action, ZERO, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 14 Rathbone Place, London, W1P 1DE. Don't forget to tell us which machine you own.

ALEX KIDD IN HIGH TECH WORLD

Virgin Mastertronic/£22.95/Sega

Boy, this guy is weird – just take a look at those ears. The crown prince of Radactian (Alex Kidd to you and me) pops up again in this latest of the *Alex Kidd* series. In this adventure our hero has a lot on his plate as his quest is to get to a new video arcade – the High Tech World.

It wouldn't seem such an ambitious task if the whole thing wasn't confused by someone even uglier than Alex. We're talking about Alex's friend, Paul (best not to ask any questions about that) who's found a map of the High Tech World, ripped it into eight pieces and scattered them across the castle.

You control Alex (and his ears) in his plight to track down the pieces. When you've found them – and this is no simple challenge with just one life – you step out of the castle and into a bunch of marauding Ninjas. Weird? You bet! They're all armed with lethal shirikens and you've got to get through the forest using your own shirikens as defence.

If you survive this you get back into the final adventure sequence set in a village. You win the game by tracking down a travel pass to the arcade and taking it to the checkpoint.

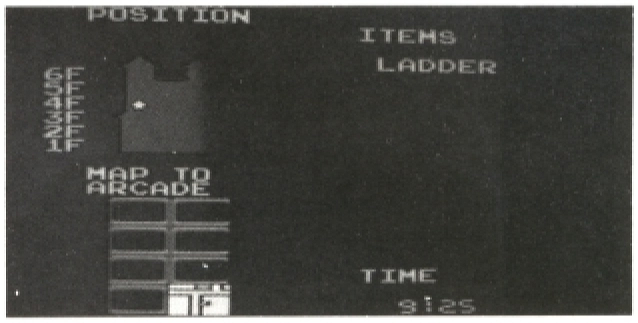
The graphics are cute and fun but don't compete with the other *Alex Kidd* games. Sound consists of a constantly-playing background tune with the occasional extra effects from such things as the record deck and telephone.

But it's the ease with which you can lose your one life that is the most annoying part of this game. If you fall down a ladder or even wear armour – you've had it.

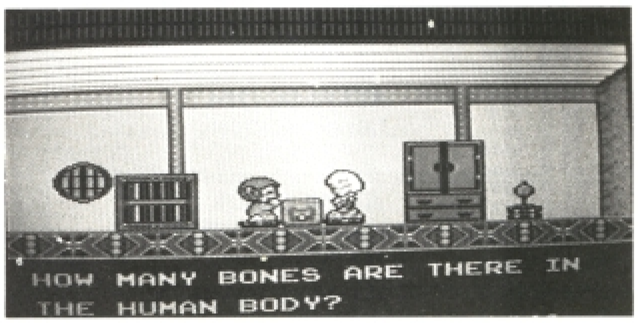
All of the *Alex Kidd* games have tried to be as cutesy as possible and this one is no exception. Even the interaction with other characters reiterates this. After all, how many other games would have you trying to get to a video arcade? Where's the blood and guts?

Hi-Tech World lacks the addictive qualities of previous games, but it's still a great challenge. If you're an adventure addict you'll love the environment which mixes multiple choice selections with information about the scene, conversation and even a quiz. The arcade section makes a really welcome change but it seems oddly out of place in an adventure and it's hard to see how Ninjas have managed to make it into the plot. Still, nobody said that the world of Alex Kidd was ordinary.

THE VERDICT 71



Call up a map of your location in the castle to find Mary again.



This test is worse than a biophysics GCSE but you've got to get every question right to get that piece of the map.

CAUGHT MAPPING

Most of your time will be spent wandering up and down ladders and looking into rooms inside the castle. You have a time limit in which to find all the map. To win you really need to find Mary who will give you a multiple choice test. Get every answer correct and she hands over a piece of the map. Along the way you can pick up keys to the safe, dial friends on the telephone and get help from signs on the wall.

If you collect all the pieces of the map and get out of the castle, you're given a password to use on subsequent games. This is damned useful because you don't need to go through the castle sequence again.

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RUSH'N ATTACK

Konami/£22.95/Nintendo

An angry soldier screams "Get 'im! Go! Go! Go!" You strap on your parachute, dive out of the plane and prepare for a bumpy landing. This is *Rush'n Attack* – Nintendo's latest and most violent offering.

You've been dropped, deep behind enemy lines. Dozens of American POWs are imprisoned in one of the heavily guarded armed bases. Your avowed duty is to rescue the prisoners by infiltrating the enemy base. Once you've got your allies out, you need to destroy the base so that it can't be used again.

But having learnt this objective, you can now forget it – the battle is all about keeping yourself alive – the POWs come a poor second compared to that! Along the way you encounter endless amounts of enemy soldiers and every one must be either knifed or blasted if you're going to survive the challenge. The knife is your main weapon and can never be taken away from you but you'll also acquire other weapons along the way. For example, arm yourself with a bazooka and you can blast through half a dozen soldiers in one go. Power like that would even make Rambo quake in his boots.

The game scrolls horizontally and though you can only move forwards soldiers approach from both sides in droves. Much of each level is split into two halves. Like in level one where you can run along the ground or climb up ladders and dash along a bridge. Climbing the ladders does not, unfortunately, let you escape attack. The bad guys have this infuriating habit of climbing up after you and, like a bad curry, they have no intention of leaving you alone.

There are six different levels altogether. The first is by far the easiest with just infantrymen and karate soldiers to contend with. The bad guys in this level are cannon fodder, and completing this level is easy once you've realised which bits of the landscape to avoid. Mines are scattered everywhere – stamp on them and you're dead!

Level two is set in an airport and is half as big again as level one. Here, the pistol soldiers and sharpshooters pop up for a piece of the action. Annoyingly, they fire at you from the top of surveillance towers and the only real way to get past them is to dodge their firepower. Other frustrating enemies are the rocket men. One way to handle these fellows is to wait for them to swoop low and then leap up with your knife.

Both level one and two are made easier if you can nab a bazooka, but in level three a pistol and invincibility star become available. These are essential if you want to clear the level. Here you're placed in a naval base, chased by soldiers and giant dobermans. The dobermans crop up at the end of the level and are best obliterated by lying down on the ground and attacking each one as it comes to maul you.



Level two – at the airport. A whole new set of soldiers to negotiate with, but you can do it.

When you reach the end of each of the levels, the screen stops scrolling and suddenly what seems like hundreds of enemy soldiers come at you. They don't take much beating, but it's the sheer number of them that's frightening. Wipe this lot out successfully and you're through to the next level where things get increasingly harder.

The display scrolls horizontally at a reasonably smooth pace. The various characters move jerkily, but this is hardly surprising since only two frames of animation are used in the running movement. Even so, the impression of running is successfully created. The action shifts along very quickly and there's so much going on all the time, that when you're attacked from all quarters it can be hard keeping up with the pace. The backgrounds are brilliant with some of the best graphics available on the Nintendo despite the tedious tune which insists on accompaning them throughout the game.



Now you've got your hands on the bazooka you can go for some serious killing.

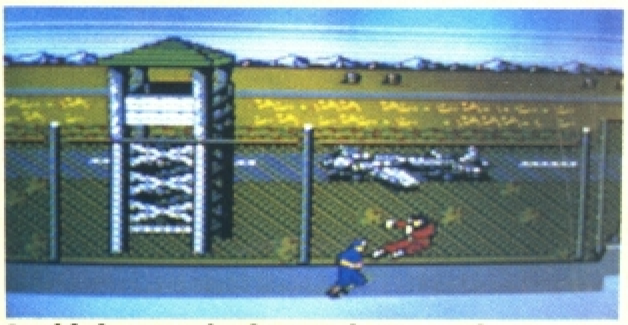
Rush'n Attack is no *Super Mario Brothers*. The aim of the game is to kill everything that moves while avoiding land mines. Whip out your trusty knife and aim straight for the stomach if you're going to get past even the first soldiers! Pacifists really should steer clear of this one.

The enemy soldiers all come at you in roughly the same place with each game, which means that you can spend time working out how to get round certain problems. This always makes things more interesting and never more so than in *Rush'N Attack*. While the option for simultaneous play with a second player is one of the game's best features.

THE VERDICT / 80



Avoid the mines – step on them and you'll be pushing up daisies.



Avoid the guys in the watchtower – they mean serious business.

GOING FOR GUTS

The knife is your standard method of defence but along the way you can accumulate various other weaponry to help out. For example, there are snipers who sneak along the ground and by stabbing these you can pick up the massive bazooka that they drop. Armed with this, you can fire a limited number of shots at oncoming enemies. These shots are very useful since one shot can do a nifty job of wiping out several soldiers at once.

You can also pick a variety of other important extra weaponry. The pistol, hand grenade and invincibility star help out enormously when the going gets really tough. The hand grenade is brilliant because you can just toss one of these at the opposition and watch smugly as they're blown into a million separate pieces. Unfortunately hand grenades have to be used within a certain time limit which seems grossly unfair because they're needed most for the end-of-level bad guys.

Acquiring the pistol makes it easy to kill soldiers from a distance. When you've used a certain number of bullets the pistol becomes useless and you drop it.

The hardest extra weapon to acquire is the invincibility star. It only lasts for a short time but within this limit you are totally immune from attack. You can wander, bleary-eyed, onto mines and they won't affect you at all.

Stuff

Does your trigger finger twitch when you're watching *Neighbours*? Have you got icons on the brain or do you dream in 16-bit simulations? If so, then clearly a strong dose of Stuff is in order. This month we prescribe a trip to the flicks or your local vid' shop where hopefully the latest movie releases will take your minds off all that slaying and screeching...

VIDEOS



PEGGY SUE GOT MARRIED

Out now. Cert 15. CBS Fox Video. Price £9.99.
"If I had my life again..." is a familiar lament. Well Kathleen *Romancing The Stone* Turner gets just that in this box office hit. Peggy Sue (Kathleen) passes out at her high school reunion ball only to wake up back in the sixties. While re-living her youth, she decides she might as well make good a few mistakes – like not marrying her husband, Charlie. (Hmm, dodgy stuff).

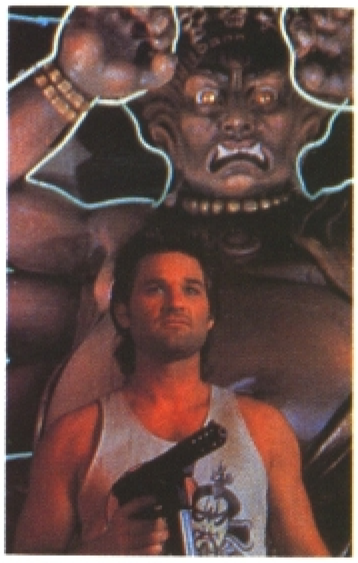
SCHWARZENEGGER TRIPLE BILL



Out now. Cert 18. CBS Fox Video. Price £29.99. Preadator only, £9.99.
If you can never decide which Schwarzenegger film is the most violent or if you simply have difficulty telling Arnie's films apart (shame on you!), you might be interested in this triple action pack of his vids. The set consists of *Raw Deal*, *Commando* and the newly released *Predator*. If that's rather too much blood and guts in one box, then you can buy *Predator* on its own and watch the gun and machete-toting Arnie battle it out in the jungle with his team of commandos who are being slaughtered by a mysterious predator. Keep up ze gut verk Arnie!

THE LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM

Out now. Cert 18. Vestron Video. Rental only.
A tongue-in-cheek vampire film? There's a joke in there somewhere, but with Ken Russell as director, tongues-in-cheeks are likely to be the most pleasant things you see in this tale of a female vampire based on the novel by Bram Stoker. Here the cast have to grapple with pagan terror, savage rituals and a whole load of special effects. It all starts when the guy from *Local Hero* (er... Peter Capaldi) unearths a prehistoric skull of "indeterminate age and species." Then the topless girl from *Castaway* (erm... you know... Amanda Donohoe) pinches the skull which is where the gore (sorry – fun!) really starts.





BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

Out now. Cert15. CBS Fox Video. Price £9.99.
Big trouble? You're telling me it's big trouble. If Chinatown's like this then it's steak and kidney pies for us from now on. Fun lovin' truck driver Jack Burton (Kurt Russell) hasn't even time to decide if he wants his rice boiled before he's launched into a world of ghosts, monsters and kung fu and that's only for starters. There's plenty of mayhem and magic. Watch this video and you may never eat a spring roll again.

MAC AND ME

Out now. Cert U. Guild Home Video. Rental only.
Hankies all round if you want to get through this big dollop of sentiment cast very much in the *ET* mould. MAC is an alien (a Mysterious Alien Creature to be precise) who has arrived on earth and lost his family. With the help of 10-year-old earthling, Eric, and his sickeningly nice family, MAC tries to find his ma, pa and sis. Drama is provided by a gang of government agents who are attempting to catch MAC for use in their experiments. If you've got a sweet tooth and an embarrassingly low mental age, it could be right up your street.



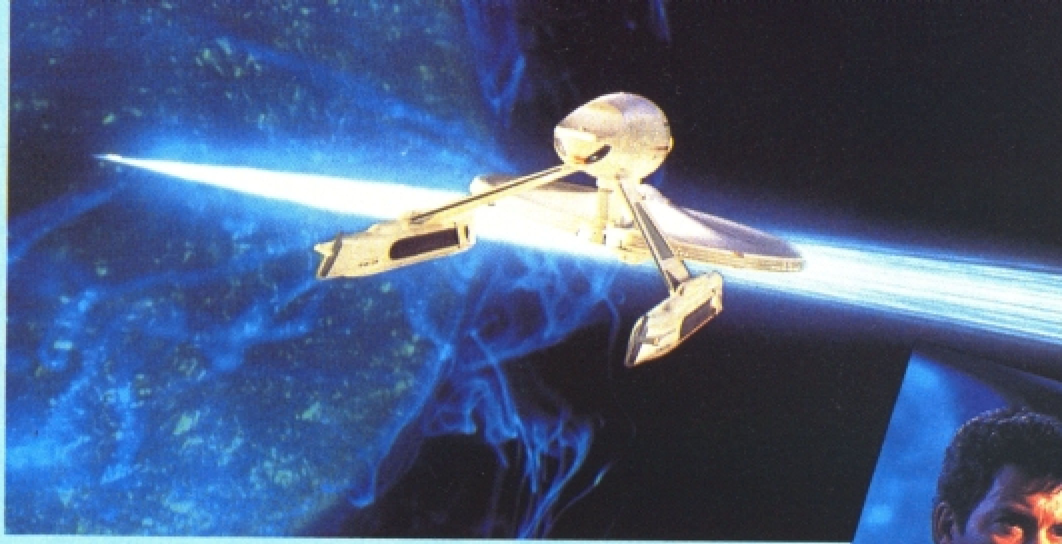
FILMS

GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

Out now. Cert 15. Orion Pictures

They don't make rock 'n' rollers like Jerry Lee Lewis anymore. His turbulent life is charted in this movie which stars Dennis *Innerspace* Quaid as 'The Killer.' *Great Balls Of Fire* concentrates on just two years in the living legend's long career: 1956, when he rocketed to fame with a string of hits, and 1958 which saw the first of many seemingly disastrous setbacks when, on a tour of England, his cradle-snatching exploits were revealed. (He'd just married his 13-year-old cousin!) If nothing else, it's got a great soundtrack!







STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER

Out Now. Cert PG. Paramount Pictures.

Yeah, the crew of the Starship Enterprise are still 'oldly going where no geriatrics have gone before. For film No 5 we've moved on to star-date 8454.130 (whatever that means) and it's time for Kirk, Spock and Co to bugger off and save the universe again. In this one, the crew are kidnapped by a maverick Vulcan and are forced to zoom off at warp factor 10 to find the meaning of life in the heart of the universe (cinch, eh?). Captain Kirk, well William Shatner really, directed and co-wrote this Trekkie film. It's oozing with excitement and special effects but, as with all *Star Trek* films, the foot is hard down on the humour pedal.

GHOSTBUSTERS II

Out now. Cert PG. Columbia Tri-Star.

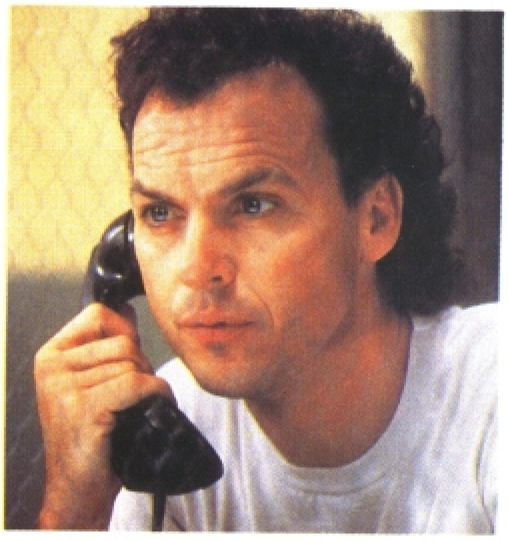
Prepare to be slimed! Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Sigourney Weaver are back in action and ready to save the world again. This sequel picks up four years on from the original film. New York has been invaded by gallons of ectoplasm, caused by the bad thoughts of all the city folk, and Siggy's baby (Barrett) is kidnapped.

We're sure that whatever the plot's like it'll still take loads of dosh at the box-office this Christmas. Oh, and if you can't get enough of the movie – there's always the *Ghostbusters II* game thanks to Activision. Spook!



THE DREAM TEAM

Out now. Cert 15. UIP.



Michael Keaton has a problem (*Doesn't he think he's a bat? Ed.*). You see, he's got this habit of belting people who annoy him – and he annoys easily. Still, that's nothing compared to his buddie, Jack McDermott (Peter Boyle) who tried to throw an advertising executive out of an upper storey window. So it's probably no surprise to learn that both these guys have been committed to a mental hospital. What is a trifle alarming is that their psychiatrist has decided to take them and a couple of other inmates from their looney bin, on a trip to see a baseball match at Yankee Stadium. Worse still, he then loses them. This warm comedy follows the attempts of the four patients to find their mentor. Watch out for another classic performance from Christopher *Back To The Future* Lloyd as one of the nutters.

BACK TO THE FUTURE II

Out now. Cert PG. UIP.

Back To The Future was too good and too successful for there not to be a sequel and four years after the original – here it is. Once more, Marty and the batty inventor 'Doc' Emmett Brown are playing with the past, and the future, in an attempt to influence the present. *(What? Ed.)* Marty's arch enemy Biff (remember him?) has now managed to marry his mother (No Marty's mum, not Biff's), and become the most powerful man in the world. Is Marty going to stand for this? You bet your life he ain't. What's he gonna do about it? Well, you'll just have to wait and see won't you? Don't get any ideas of relaxing at the end though, Part III has already been made.



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T-SHIRT

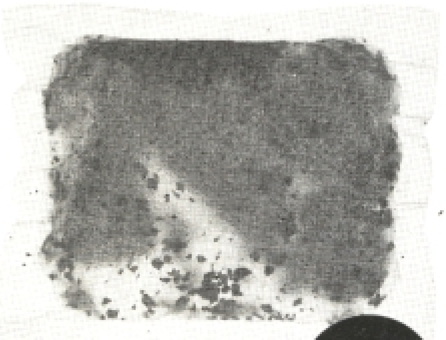
Prevents embarrasing itching 'cos it's made of pure cotton. What's more it's got a très bon ZERO logo on the front and a rather Daliesque stopwatch on the back. Worth £5.95 it's a must!

OUT OF STOCK, SORRY!



T-BAG

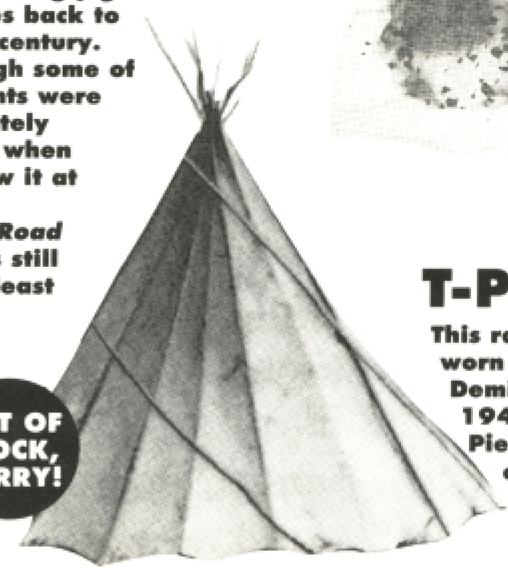
An exclusive T-bag as used by Pauline in *EastEnders* complete with perforations. Worth £1.50



OUT OF STOCK, SORRY!

T-CAKE

This exceedingly good cake dates back to the 17th century. And though some of the currants were unfortunately damaged when Fergie saw it at a recent *Antiques Road Show*, it's still worth at least two pee.



OUT OF STOCK, SORRY!

T-PEE

This rare Indian T-pee was worn by the magnificent Demis Roussos in his 1949 tour of Worthing Pier. Worth quite a lot of anybody's money.

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THE YIKES! INTERVIEW



Funnily enough this month's inspiration for the YIKES interview cropped up whilst the ZERO crew were engrossed in an episode of the 'cult' Children's ITV series *Rainbow* (hem!) We suddenly paused to ask the burning question: "Who plays Bungle the bear?" So, we got on the blower to the Forum Theatre, Billingham where the *Rainbow* team were making two live performances a day.



Yikes: Um. Well, the first thing we want to know is this. Who are you? We know you're not REALLY a bear so don't try that hoary old chestnut.
Bungle: I'm actually called Malcolm Lord. I'm an actor.
Yikes: You went to stage school then?
Bungle: Yes. I went to drama school.
Yikes: And have you ever been in anything else on telly?
Bungle: No, not really. I've done quite a lot of stuff on stage though, but I don't expect you'd have seen any of it. I played a football hooligan once.
Yikes: Blimey. Anyway, getting back to *Rainbow*. Um, are you naked under the Bungle suit, or do you wear pyjamas or something?

I played a football hooligan once

Bungle: Ha-ha. Well, I'm not quite naked – I'm actually covered in loads of frilly white material.
Yikes: Yikes – that sounds a bit pervy....
Bungle: No, it's not. I'm rather skinny you see, so I need a lot of padding. That's why I use the frilly stuff – to make me bigger.
Yikes: You're naked under that though?
Bungle: Just about. Yes.
Yikes: It must be pretty hot under the studio lights covered in all that lot.
Bungle: Well yes, it is rather. Mind you, it's worse in the theatre. It's absolute murder at times. I've almost fainted on, ooooh, a couple of occasions at least.
Yikes: Is there a zip in the bearsuit or is it just a velcro jobby?
Bungle: There are some poppers around the back actually – I have to sort of clamber in and out of Bungle's bottom. You can see the flap if you look, which is actually the reason Bungle tends to face the camera most of the time.

I climb in through Bungle's bottom

Yikes: So 'going to the toilet' must be a bit tricky?
Bungle: It certainly is. I've had to learn to hold it in. Live performances at the theatre are the worst though.
Yikes: Have you ever been sick inside the suit?
Bungle: No.
Yikes: Is it true that at one of your 'office parties' Geoffrey head-butted the bloke

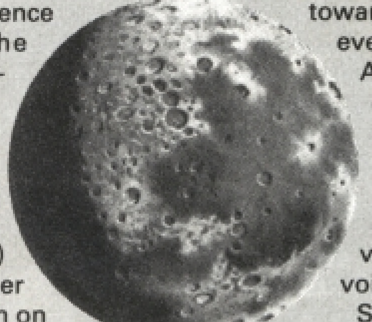


who operates Zippy, leaving him with a wound across the top of the nose that needed 12 stitches?
Bungle: No. Everyone gets on really well as it happens. We've been together so long now that it's sort of like a family – the show's been running for 17 years.
Yikes: How did you end up getting the job in the first place?
Bungle: Well, I haven't actually been Bungle the whole time. I originally saw an advert for someone to play George (the hippo), applied, and got the job. I was inside George for about eight years, then, about two years ago, the chap who originally played Bungle left the show – and I was promoted.
Yikes: Promoted? So does that mean that Bungle gets paid more than George?
Bungle: Only a bit more. The extra money is because I actually have to 'walk around'. George and Zippy stay behind things and you never see their legs – well, you did see Zippy's once but that was definitely an exception.
Yikes: Do you get more money than Geoffrey as well?
Bungle: No. Nobody gets more money than Geoffrey.
Yikes: Oh. Okay, time for some 'quick-fire' questions. What do you think about the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops and the reappearance of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia?
Bungle: Erm. Eh? Um, I don't know really. I'll have to go and ask Zippy – he knows about things like that.
Yikes: What's your taste in music?
Bungle: Well, when I'm out of the suit I like Cilla Black. I really love her – I even sing *Surprise Surprise* in the bath. And I like Phil Collins and Elton John. But when I'm in the suit I like Kylie and Jason.
Yikes: Have you ever been attacked by a particularly gruesome crocodile?
Bungle: No. Um, no, I haven't.
Yikes: Bears (as everyone knows) have uncannily large plonkers. Is Bungle popular with the women he meets?
Bungle: Well, if you look closely enough you'll see that Bungle hasn't actually *got* a penis. But if he had he wouldn't really know what to do with it anyway – he's rather innocent you see! He'd probably go to Zippy and say something like "Ooooh, look at this. What's this for, Zippy?" and then Zippy would ask Geoffrey, and Geoffrey would explain it to them both.
Yikes: Rod, Jane and Freddy seem to be doing pretty well for themselves. How much did Jane's nose job cost?
Bungle: (Extremely long pause) I don't know. She just had it done without telling anyone – we didn't even notice at first. In fact no-one noticed for about three days.
Yikes: We noticed it immediately. So did the rest of the country.
Bungle: Oh.
Yikes: (Embarrassing silence). Erm....
Bungle: (Embarrassing silence). Ummm....
Yikes: We haven't got any more questions actually....
Bungle: Can I go then?
Yikes: Yes. Goodbye Bungle.
Bungle: Bye bye.
Telephone: Click. Bzzzzzzzzz.

ASTRONOMY CORNER

by Professor Bernard Nebula

After last month's astounding revelations about the giant spider's web surrounding the solar system, I've learnt from moles at the Pentagon that NASA is busy getting together plans for production of an Anti Space Spider Defence Initiative Rocket. The ASSDIR (as it's imaginatively nicknamed) will be a three-mile long 'tube' powered by blasts of nuclear fission, and it's going to be assembled in space (near the Moon) in 1991. I phoned Heather Couper (the only woman on earth who's interested in astronomy) to find out a bit more. But she wasn't in, so I phoned Patrick Moore instead but he wasn't in either. So I phoned Dial-A-Disc, listened to Sinitta for a few agonising minutes, and then phoned Heather Couper again. She was back. (She'd been out shopping). Here's what she said:



"Hello Barry. It's absolute mayhem... the giant Space Spider is in the vicinity of Jupiter and is, I can now reveal, definitely heading towards earth... definitely... everyone's a bit jumpy, Andrew... it's heading definitely for earth, it's gigantic... a monstrous interstellar arachnid... mandibles crunching away silently in the vacuous tracts of the void..."

So there you have it. A bit 'prosey' perhaps, but true - and rather alarming. So alarming in fact that to stop mass panic there's a total world 'news veto' on the story: you can only read about the beast's progress here, with me – Bernard Nebula. More next month.

BLACK SHAPE

Hello. It's me, Black Shape – the ALTERNATIVE letters page. Have I dwindled in size and died since last issue? Have I sausages! Just the opposite in fact – I've got bigger and stronger. I'm all throbbing and ready to go. So what am I waiting for? Erm, actually I'm waiting for 'a love that's true' but until that comes along, here's a selection of your pathetic scrawlings.

Have you noticed that the lovely Annie Jones (Jane in *Neighbours*) has had a face lift? Well, I have (noticed it that is, not had a facelift). She was starting to get a little bit 'baggy' around the eyes a couple of months ago, then she didn't appear for a few episodes, and then suddenly there she was again - with an almost spanking brand new boat-race. What a picture of beauty: almost porcelain perfection. I bet she denies having plastic surgery though (watch out for her next *Wogan* appearance).
Jonathan Warren
Walsham, Norfolk.

***I phoned Annie Jones' PR company and they deny all knowledge of her having ever been under the plastic surgeon's knife. So you were right! Well done.* Black Shape.**

I read your first issue with something approaching incredulity. You obviously had to make up some kind of letter but *Rainbow* pyjamas? What on earth are you on? Why not a letter about piracy or another COMPUTER RELATED subject. After all, this is supposedly a computer games magazine.
Alan Gonad
Burton-on-Trent, Staffs.

***So you're saying that computer games-players aren't interested in Rainbow characters. Okay, I won't ever mention them again then.* Black Shape.**

Re your '*Rainbow* pyjamas' reference from last issue. Quote: "Bungle, Zippy, George, Geoffrey, Rod, Jane and Freddy - they're all there if you look hard enough." Well, I too have a pair of *Rainbow* pyjamas but try as I might I can't seem to locate Geoffrey. I've been over the blinking things with a fine tooth comb and he's definitely not there. Is this a mistake on your part or do you think we've got different makes of pyjama (I got mine from Harrods).
Rod Staker
East Tilbury, Essex.

Oh dear. I 've promised not to mention Rainbow characters again, so I'm afraid I can't answer you - sorry.
Black Shape.

Undoubtably my favourite actor in the world has got to be Sean Connery. In the role of Ghandi in Alan Parker's epic blockbuster *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid*, he gave one of the finest performances ever seen on the Big Screen - and I, for one, shall never forget it.
T. N. McKellar
Blackheath, London.

***Well done.* Black Shape.**

CLAIMS TO FAME

The part of the mag where you prove to the world that you're a 'friend to the stars'. All we ask for is a photograph of you standing next to (or in a compromising position with) a 'celeb'. Paul Daniels maybe. Or Sandy Gall. Or 'Bob' Holness... anyone.

We had a bit of an appalling response to last month's request for your pictures as it happens – basically, erm, we didn't receive any at all. Not a sausage. Not a blinking sausage. Surely some of you have been snapped with a 'personality'. Okay, so the selection we offered you last ish might have been a bit 'dubious', but just to prove we aren't total liars here are a couple of genuine ones...



T'ZER WITH BRIAN JACKS
Teresa, our beloved leaderene 'in cahoots', with vicious Judo black-belt holder Brian Jacks.



DAVID WITH ROLF
David 'Whistlin Rick' Wilson (*YS* staff writer) 'in cahoots' with a certain Mr Rolf Harris.

Come on! Send in your snapshots! And if you want them back, enclose an sae. We're offering you fame here (erm, and a software prize), all for the cost of a couple of stamps and a trek to the nearest post-box. You know it makes sense.

HIGHEST JOYSTICK IN THE WORLD



Have you ever found yourself on the wind-swept summit of K2, with a joystick in one hand and a camera in the other? Blimey! You're obviously a bit weird then, aren't you? More next month.

(*Oi, come back and tell them what you're talking about. Ed*).

Erm. Everyone's got a joystick and what's more – joysticks are easily transportable. The trouble is they always end up getting 'transported' to 'predictable' locations - bedrooms and lounges for instance. Borrrriing!!!

We think it's about time they got taken places. Interesting places. And in particular HIGH places. So, next time you pack your rucksack (or whatever) don't forget these two things:

1) A joystick (any make), and...
2) A camera.

That way you can take a picture of the joystick wherever you find yourself. Then send the photo to us, give us a rough altitude and you'll get a rather super prize (if it's printed).

Oh and taking a shot of a joystick in an aeroplane only counts if you can see the view out of the window as well as the joystick itself, or if you've blagged entry into the cockpit and managed a snapshot next to the altimeter.

To start things off here's a piccie of a Konix Navigator that 'intrepid reporter/popstar' David Wilson placed 8.2 cm above sea-level (erm, or River Thames level if you like, it's the same thing really, isn't it?). Beat that if you can!

READERS WIVES (ERM, AND THINGS)

We've had as much joy on the Readers Wives (Erm, And Things) front as we have on the Claims To Fame, i.e. not a sausage again. Actually, that's a lie. We did have one 'entry' from Andrew Kelly of Reading. Unfortunately he hadn't quite got the idea, and as a result his photo was too rude to reproduce. In fact it was so rude we can't even tell you about it so we've had to bail him out with 'one we prepared earlier'...

Here's a picture of Staff Writer Duncan MacDonald's girlfriend. She's called Birgitta (she's Swedish), and the cat she's holding is called Mirra (who died shortly after the photo was taken). The cat Birgitta got to replace Mirra turned out to be a bit of a horror though, and dragged all manner of 'semi-dead' animals into the kitchen - until it was 'severely disciplined', that is.



Birgitta with her old cat, Mirra



Birgitta's new cat with 'a chum'

BUILDING TIPS

by Robert McAlpine Jnr

Hello there. Well, what a response I got from Issue One – you could have knocked me down with a feather (proverbially speaking of course). However, some of you suggested that my methods for taking out an interior wall were 'a trifle on the cautious side' – in particular a chap called **Steve McDougall** from Gwent, who had this to say:

Dear Robert Junior
Your old man might be the richest and most successful construction mogul since the Egyptian Pharaohs but you yourself are a total arse-brain....

I'm afraid I had to cut the rest of the letter because it was a little bit on the rude side, but Steve outlined the way in which he personally would approach the problem of interior wall removal:

(1) Have a cup of tea.
(2) Hack straight into the offending wall with a hefty sledgehammer.
(3) Keep thumping away until the wall is no longer there.
(4) Wrap sellotape around the ends of any dangling wires.



And that's all he wrote. It doesn't quite have that professional sparkle I like to see and it also seems a mite 'unfinished'. Still, everyone has their own way of doing things (and the world would be a boring place if they hadn't), so well done Steve.

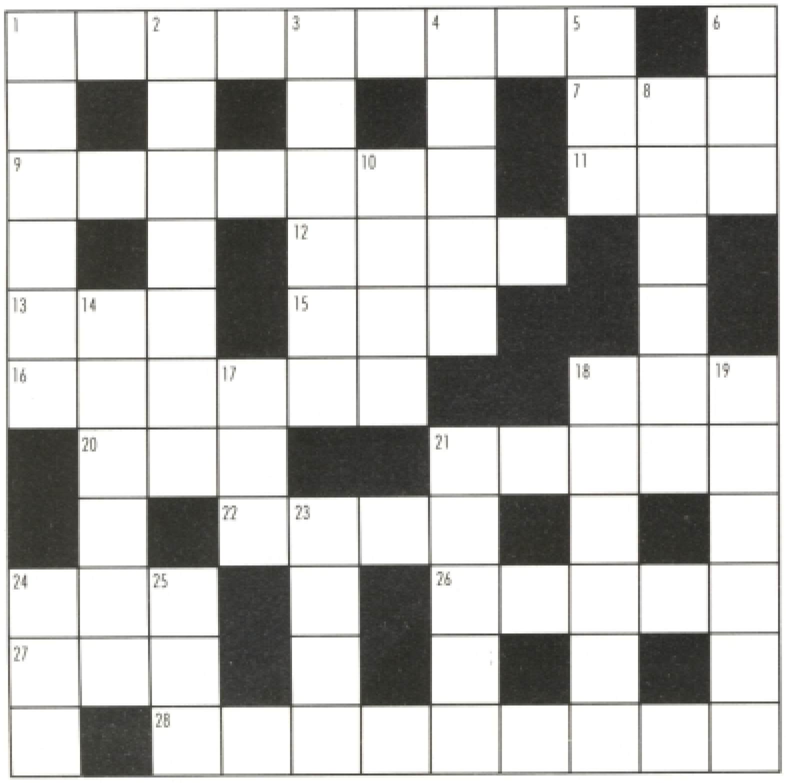
A quickie here, sent in by **Jacques Revée** (Managing Director of Perrier Ltd in Paris).

Dear Monsieur McAlpine
When mixing concrete, use French carbonated mineral water instead of tap water (the bubbles help to mesh the cement and sand molecules more tightly together). You need to use absolutely loads of it though, so start getting stocks in fast – before the price goes up!

Well that's a tip, if ever I've heard one – thanks Jacques. Keep building the Robert McAlpine Junior way. See you all next month.

Send your building queries or tips to Robert McAlpine Junior at the usual Yikes! address. You could win a prize.

YIKES! THE PRIZE CROSSWORD



Suss out the clues, fill in the grid and send it (or a photocopy) to Prize Crossword, YIKES!, 14 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1DE. A prize for the first correct entry pulled out of the hat.

ACROSS

1 The go- between for your computer (9)
7 After tax (3)
9 Miss Brightman's Angel of Music (7)
11 Pass away (3)
12 Wading bird with thin curved-down bill (4)
13 Manage (3)
15 Catch like 7 down (3)
16 Vitality (6)
18 Given food (3)
20 Attempt (3)
21 Belfry (5)
22 Discharge (4)
24 Enclosure for pigs (3)
26 Adjacent (5)
27 Old fashioned poem (3)
28 The dividing line between two adjacent river systems (9)

DOWN

1 Tainted (6)
2 Coach wearing Reeboks, perhaps? (7)
3 Calibre (6)
4 Acknowledge (5)
5 Outcome (3)
6 Dined (3)
8 One or the other (6)
10 Comply (4)
14 Liberated (6)
17 Health conscious tall grass (3)
18 Terminate (6)
19 Bank on (6)
21 Cinderella left her slipper on one (5)
23 Type of whiskey (4)
24 Vase for narcotics (3)
25 Unprecedented (3)

Here's the moment you word freaks have been waiting for! So no more tearing your hair out, the solutions to Issue One's crossie are here...

Across: 1. Carnival; 7. Slop; 9. Plate; 10. Lane; 11. Adorable;14. Limit; 15. Owns; 17. Same; 19. Pact; 21. Dear; 24. Aloof; 25. Discern; 27. Once; 28. Clean; 29. Mead; 30. Toprated.

Down: 1. Caption; 2. Reason; 3. Ideal; 4. Automaton; 5. Slab; 6. Epee; 7. Slated; 8. Only; 12. Discord; 16. Spaced; 18. Trained; 20. Ace; 22. Extent; 23. Pine; 25. Dome; 26. Scar; 28. Car.

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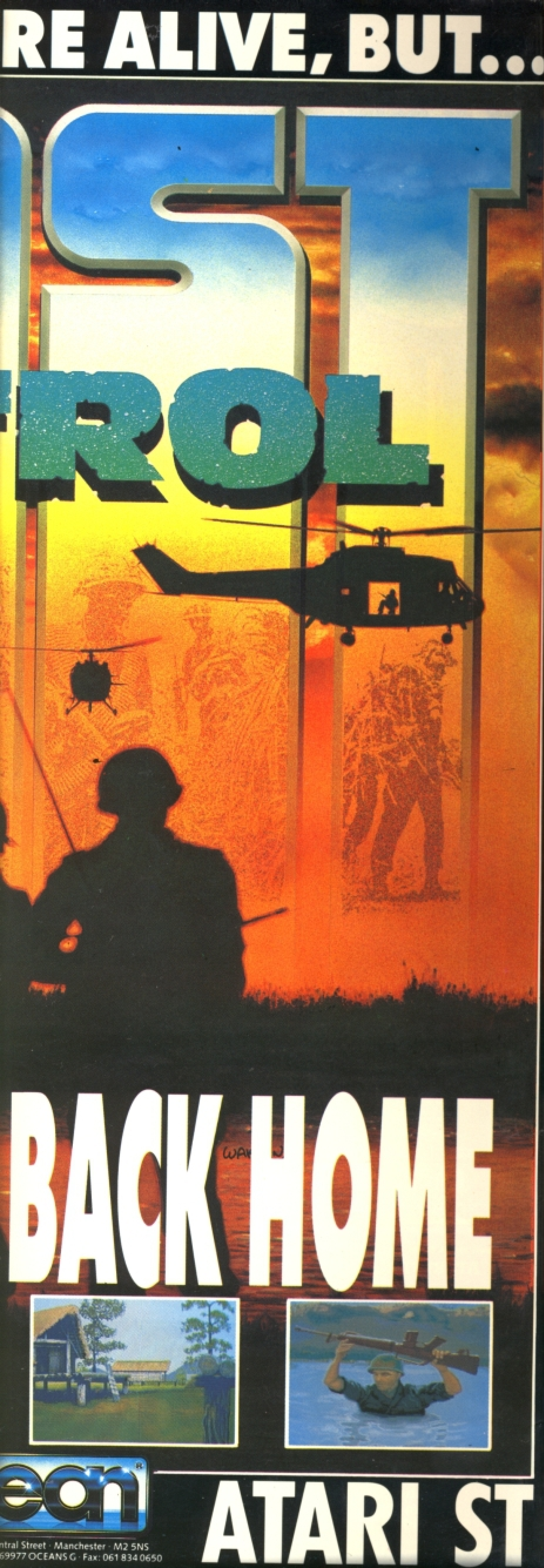
'Ello,'ello, 'ello, what's this we have here then? Well actually it's a rather spiffo ZERO T-shirt, that's what. And you can be the proud owner of one for nothing. It's a cinch, and what's more, it'll only take you all of a pico second (or two). All you have to do is send YIKES some photies of Readers' Wives for example or (if you're not the vertiginous type) some very high joysticks, man. More literary inclined? Then get scribbling to Black Shape or Robert McAlpine Jnr (he's very keen on new techniques). Everyone who gets something printed will win this rather fetching ZERO T-shirt.

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